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FROM THE BEQUEST OF

DR. THEODORE W. HUNT '65

THE
SISTER OF CHARITY;

OR,

FROM BERMONDSEY TO BELGRAVIA.

Annie
BY MRS. CHALLICE.
"

"Philanthropy must own no party."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO
LADY MOLESWORTH,
A TRIBUTE
TO HER SYMPATHY IN THE CAUSE OF PROGRESS
AND A MARK OF RESPECT TO THE MEMORY
OF HER HUSBAND,
THE LATE RIGHT HONOURABLE
SIR WILLIAM MOLESWORTH, BART., M.P.
BY THE AUTHORESS.

THE SISTER OF CHARITY.

CHAPTER I.

The Pawnbroker's Shop—The Railway "Rough"—The Gin Palace—The Poor Parson—The Magdalen that can't be—The Starving Artist and his chef-d'œuvre.

ON a bleak night of November, a few people stood round the doorway of a house in one of the most poverty-stricken neighbourhoods of London. This doorway was the entrance of sin and woe; of the latter as the frequent precursor to the former:—in fact, it was a pawnbroker's shop.

Tears now dropped on its threshold from the eyes of a young, but emaciated woman, whose shoulders were scarcely covered by a patched and faded gown. In her arms she clutched a sleeping babe; a shawl partly screened the little unconscious one from the cold wind; but the next moment it was suddenly

pulled off by the mother, who, with fearful resolution, a resolution that burnt up her tears and caused her eye to gleam in its sunken socket, exchanged this, her best garment, for the means wherewith to buy a morsel of bread. As she came out, she met a man dressed in a worn and dirty suit of corduroy; but, despite this, and a face telling a tale of gin and rum, it needed not the agricultural implements he carried to identify his stalwart figure with the notion of one of England's peasantry.

He would have passed the woman without noticing her; but, pulling him by the sleeve, and drawing him beneath the light of the street-lamp, she looked, with a wild smile, into his face, and showed him the little pieces of silver in her hand.

"You won't take those there to-night, husband?" she said in a low husky voice, first pointing to the tools he held, and then to the shop, "see, here is enough for the children and us until to-morrow," and again she rattled together the few small coins. With a half inaudible oath, he broke away from her feeble grasp, and entered the pawnbroker's. For a moment she stood still, but was aroused by the wail of the child, who seemed about to awaken beneath the influence of the cold; involuntarily, as it were, the mother hushed it; then, as by a sharp sudden pang of recollection, and with a hysteric sob, hurried away through the gloom.

The whole truth was easy to conjecture at a glance. The man had been tempted by higher wages to leave the country, and work at the railway, not a hundred yards from this squalid street; that he had had his discharge, with other supernumeraries a few days since, and now, having spent his wages in the manner so easily and fatally suggested in this huge metropolis, he wanted more money. To do what with? To feed that worn and wretched woman with the infant at her breast? To carry nourishment to the half-naked children, grovelling together on the floor of the one sickly chamber? To emancipate them from the overcrowded lodging-house, and carry them back to the country, to the green fields and the blue sky, away from the stifling, fever-laden, and utterly demoralizing air they breathe?

No, he wanted it as the passport back again to the infernal region he had just quitted, as the means to stand again beneath the bright intoxicating glare of the gas lights, to listen once more to the prostituted and, therefore, soul polluting schemes of liberty and equality suggested there; in short, he wanted it as the refuge of despair at the gin palace.

The wife, in the meanwhile, divided the loaf at home—if home for childhood that may be deemed where irreverence, debauchery, and drunkenness abound.

And now, reader, if not too much disconcerted

by the gloom, the cold, the poverty, and the vice, you will stand with me beneath the very lamp which just now threw its gleam on the wretched woman and her husband, watching who next crosses that fatal threshold.

A middle aged man approaches in a rusty suit of black. Around his throat is a limp, ill-tied, once white 'kerchief. He pauses as if fearful of observation, and as he turns his face, you may observe how different is its expression from that of the last customer; aye, different as the cut and colour of his coat. Suffering—deep, long, anxious, and terrible, may be read there at a glance, but not a trace of vice.

In fact, the intelligence also legible there, might, possibly, alone have preserved him from the moral degradation of self indulgence: nevertheless, I can scarcely admit this as a probability. How many instances may be quoted of the impatience, the cunning, the danger, of intelligence alone, when unsupported and animated by a higher grace! That the latter has been given to this man may be inferred from his calling. His calling? Yes! you well may start—he is an ordained Priest of the Church of England.

His sad story may be told by a few strokes; alas! that pen and pencil should so often have to draw such from the life! First, the vain efforts

to be just, charitable, and even liberal as an under-paid, over-tasked curate; then an abortive attempt to gain pupils in this great city of competition (even in the hiring out brains) where so many have arrived in hope and died in despair; the utter inadequacy of the paltry pittance doled out once a week by a plethoric pluralist, as remunerative for all release from labour in his rich corner of the Vineyard; a delicate, sensitive, yet hard working wife; and children half starving, are a few of the horrors, the incongruities, the seeming anomalies, by which we, in this so vaunted high state of civilization, are surrounded.

Well, here is the sequel to this chapter of everyday life in the fact of this poor clergyman, stealing, beneath the shades of night, to part with his watch at the pawnbroker's shop. The tradesman and his customer think they are unobserved; but, it is easy for us, by the magic of truth, to see the cold speculation, the long chilled callous heart on one side the counter, and the tremulous shame, varying the hue of the sunken cheek, on the other; of sorrow, too, (a childish regret it may seem to some to find a place amid so many stern miseries) in parting with the old companion, the monitor of college hours, of happier times, of bridal hopes, of many serious duties. The watch is pawned.

Pass on, poor minister ! Go on your way home ! Defray your landlord's demands for the humble roof which shelters you, the citizen of another world, for whom, it may be, a mansion above is prepared. Who knows but you are one of those, still to inherit the earth ? Who knows but that bright angels are hovering near you in your passage through this miserable alley ? Go on, thou man, ordained to bless your fellow mortals, to speak to them the glad tidings of the Eternal Truth—and, ye rich men, will ye 'howl and weep ?'

Now, perhaps, you are tired of waiting for more revelations of poverty ; perhaps you would rather sink down in the soft cushioned chair of the prosperous man's library, from whence this poor brother's wrongs are carefully excluded, or taught to tread softly on the thick carpet, and are kept in the background of luscious half-subdued light ? If so, let me not weary by detaining you here longer, although I am determined to wait and see if any one else come this way to-night. You will still be my companion ? Very well—then look yonder. Alas ! are not these bye streets free from the footfall of dishonoured woman ?

Two approach, whose appearance and calling cannot be doubted, though different types of their most unhappy class ;—the one, bold, painted, tawdry ; the other wan, delicate, and fragile. The only bond

linking these females together, is their common degradation, and yet, though equally branded by Society, what discrepancy is evident between them ! The one resembles Jezabel ; her evil power over man is, and her end may probably be the same. Will the other become a Magdalen ? Will there not appear, in the good time, the fitting means to save her, to pull her forth from the deep dark abyss ?

Woman holy ! is surely the appropriate earthly instrument to rescue woman fallen. A sister's support, sympathy, courage, gentleness, self-denial, and utmost self-abnegation are needed here. This poor deluded one needs all these to aid her in forsaking and repenting ; necessity, the recklessness of the sex when outraged, of forsaken love, and crushed hopes ; nay, even the commands and threats of the demoniacal into whose hands she has fallen, impel her forward in her wretched course. Think of this, your mighty work, daughters of England. Think of the power and responsibility vested in you, Christian Mothers, chaste Matrons. Think, above all, oh ! ye vain, exacting, or lovers of competition and low prices in the mart and the work-room, think of your share in adding to the foul dregs of this iniquity.

Enlarge your hearts and sympathies ; fling from you your narrow-minded prejudices ; blush not only,

but frame, devise, enlarge, *prevent*, and rescue. Your co-operation is mostly needed here.

In the meanwhile, the two women have entered the pawnbroker's.

In answer to a rough hint from her companion, the frail girl unclasps a pair of rings from ears moulded delicately enough to tell a tale of gentle parentage. After a minute, with a sigh and half abstracted look, she hands their value to the other woman. The latter now presents, with a guilty, furtive glance, a dozen fine cambric handkerchiefs. It is not this tradesman's custom to ask questions ; but, while he looks in their corners for signs of ownership, a cunning look of intuitive comprehension passes over his face. He seems glad to add them to his varied hoard, and his customers depart.

Scarcely have they gone, than another takes their place, carrying a square and seemingly heavy parcel.

His figure is almost too slight ; his countenance peculiarly attractive to any who know how to read it as the history of the soul within. Scarcely looking towards the owner and occupant of the shop, he proceeds, with the precision of painful determination, to remove the wrapper of his recent burthen ; which turns out to be a picture.

For a moment, he gazes on it lovingly, remorsefully, then, as if startled, or rebuked by the impatient

voice of his companion, he turns himself and his treasure towards the light. And what a double subject of contemplation is thus revealed ! First, the artist, with his slightly drooping and attenuated form, needing not the pale cheek to tell of anxious thought, of profound study, of frequent physical want. A real artist, he looks, in every sense of the word ; not from the affectation of singularity in small outward things, by which so many young students pretend to demonstrate their calling, but by the evident absence of that thought of self, the presence of which such affectation betrays.

The deep, earnest, sunken eye looks as if often in communion with nature and her sublime mysteries ; as if accustomed, too, to look upward to the eternal source of these. The lofty brow is stamped by the just uses of affliction, and the triumph of self-abnegation ; even now, in such a place, in the moment of some extreme and evident necessity, there rests not one shade of shame upon it. No, by the power of some inward strength, he seems to rise beyond it, and even to tower above the refinement of a sensitive nature which has helped, undoubtedly, to blend the soft and exquisite tints of the landscape he exposes to view. The product of his pencil is beautiful. The clouds, the trees, the water, the sunlight, and the shadows, are pourtrayed by the masterly hand of the unwearied and constant student of all these.

Even the critic to whom they are now unfolded seems, for an instant, startled by the force of genius, and turns the gas-light harshly on its subject, as if hoping, for his pocket's sake, to find or produce, a flaw. But this, even artificial light and cunning cannot do, or pretend ; so, sullenly, as if foiled by superior power, he hands some gold to the artist, and clutches that which is worth, even if estimated by money value alone, more than twenty times the amount. The painter, however, does not complain, nor does he speak at all.

With one more glance towards his picture, he silently takes the gold, and walks away. Whither ?

I, for one, shall follow him. I am in pursuit of life scenes, and may as well go this man's way as any other. Better, for he is modest and heroic.

CHAPTER II.

Squalid Streets—Are you really Virtuous?—The Gate of a London Graveyard—The Feverish Child—Who knows the Fate of his Bones?—Emblems of Death or Life?—Why be Buried alive in Bermondsey?

THE last visitor to the pawnbroker's shop pursued his way at a rapid pace along the street. When arrived at its end, he stopped; and, unconscious of observation, satisfied himself that the few sovereigns he had just transferred to his pocket were still safely there. Those who understand the importance of trifles may read in this little act the nervous tremor in which they had been taken from their late owner. A gleam of satisfaction passed over his pale, wan face at the touch and sight of the gold; a sigh, as of relief, escaped him; and then, he exclaimed:

“Thank Heaven! for his sake and her's.”

In another minute, he passed round the corner, into a bye-way, still worse paved and illumined than

the former ; the houses were gaunt and dingy in their outline against the night sky, in which a pale moon had risen ; some of them were propped up, as they were in danger of falling. A half-starved dog, and a lean cat were quarrelling over a refuse heap in the middle of the road, while the angry and coarse tones of contention were heard from within those deplorable habitations.

Aye, from within ! Dare I, gentle reader, divert your sympathies from Transatlantic sorrows, and beg a momentary glance within those crumbling houses ?

Virtue, crushed and wailing ; brute force triumphant and loud ; youth precocious in crime, ceasing, in fact, to be youth ; sickness, temptation, and all the elements of death. Sight to be shuddered at, and to sicken ; yet, remember, that each one of this human swarm has his, or her history, position, and influence in the world, and on the very society in which you move ; it may be, in some cases, on the very clothes you wear.

Your responsibility, however, would have been greater than it is, if a handful of practical, intelligent, and earnest men (men, who fain would dig to the root of evil, and eradicate it from a Christian commonwealth) had not already stepped into these abodes of infamy, breathed this atmosphere of blight, moral and physical, and devised a means of rescue.

But the work is only at its commencement. Let all aid, and none dare limit it.

“ I can conceive a time when the world shall be
Much better visibly, and when, as far
As social life and its relations tend,
Then, morals, manners, shall be lifted up
To a pure height we know not of, nor dream ;
When education, conscience, and good deeds
Shall have just equal sway, and civil claims
. Truth shall reign. ’

In the meanwhile, this purlieu of a great city, this stench of moral degradation may be well appalling when suddenly applied to the nerves of those accustomed to revel in the luxuries of good conscience, good means, good looks, and good fame. Good conscience ; for do they not dance joyfully at a subscription ball, in favour of some unhappy class or nation ? Good means, and good looks, while economizing by the favour of ultra competition, and adorned by the labour of the starving ?

Good fame, because “ it is easy to do well, when it is impossible to be tempted ;—it is easy—and not particularly meritorious. It is really no great virtue in any of us not to steal.”

The night wanderer at length emerged, and turning a sharp angle, stood before the rusty gate of a grave-yard. Vainly endeavouring to open it,

he moved towards a little door on his left, and gently tapped.

It was opened by a feeble-looking woman, who seemed to recognize him; for, holding the candle so as to secure it from being extinguished by the chill wind, and at the same time to throw a light on the stranger's face, she quietly said :

"I thought it must be you, Sir, but how late !"

"Painful business detained me," he answered, "but can I have the key to-night?"

"My husband is out, but he left it with me, thinking you might come, after what you said the other morning; here it is," she continued, drawing out a skeleton-looking-key from her pocket, "but why should you go into that damp grave-yard such a night as this?"

"To-morrow," answered the visitor, "I leave England."

"And to-morrow," she rejoined, "is a month since he was buried; alack-a-day, the troubles there are here below, Sir!"

"True, and you remind me; how is your child to-night?"

"No better, Sir; the doctor's stuff does him no good;" and the woman led the way to a little bed on the floor in the distant corner of the room.

There lay a sleeping boy, three or four years old;

one thin hand was thrown outside the coverlid, and a fierce, red spot burnt on the poor shrunken, wizened cheeks. The outline of his puny form could just be traced beneath the clean, but ragged counterpane, and a hard husky cough caused him suddenly to turn, but did not awaken him.

"There, Sir," the mother continued, "it's just so all night; cough—cough; and as to getting him plump again, I can't; there's nothing that will tempt him to eat."

Poor, pale mother and child! The artist looked wistfully from one to the other; then said:

"You ought to remove from here, if possible."

The woman shook her head in hopeless despair. The charnel-house in that bye corner of the overcrowded city was the only home, she thought, for her. She was the grave-digger's wife. Her visitor then moved towards the door, saying that he would return shortly.

A few moments more, and he was standing at the foot of a heap of mould at the extreme end of that gloomy burial-ground. A very simple, and small stone was placed at the head; if inscription were there, none could be seen by the pale light of the moon. Uncertain, however, though this light, it revealed enough to dismay. Death and desolation seemed to reign triumphant. The atmosphere of that grim spot formed a winding sheet for those

still in the adjoining and over-crowded human habitations. The recent rain had caused a peculiar exhalation from the earth, reeking with mortality, and the sacrilegious outrage daily committed within that narrow cemetery sent forth an avenging breath into the great city around.*

True civilization would never have brought this retribution from the dead upon the living.

In what age, or country, can a parallel be found to this, our enormity, of intramural interment? Repulsive to religion, to delicacy, to reverence, to health; subversive of common decency, and mockery of the mourner, it taunts and taints; worse than folly, it amounts to national sin, recoils in contagion, and is thus avenged by a large harvest of sorrow and dissolution.

“Who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? Who hath the oracle of his ashes, or whither they are to be scattered?”

The mourner at length passed slowly away, threading his path as carefully as the slippery ground would permit, lest his foot should trample on what he, at least, deemed sacred. The grave by which he had just wept was newly made, or the shifting surface might have rendered it difficult to have exclaimed, with certainty, “Alas, poor Yorick!” But surely,

* Since writing the above, progress has done much to remedy it.

the good time is coming when more equality shall prevail in the resting places of the rich and the poor, when the narrow house of Lazarus shall be as well kept as the mausoleum of Dives ?

Shall not emblems of life, rather than what is called, death, of sweet repose, rather than repulsive horror, abound more and more in Christian cemeteries ?

But, "what has wealth to do there—why should it crowd the dust of the great ? What servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave ?"

No pride of man, nor vain glorious pomp and praise ; no hero-worship ; but evidences of hope, faith, charity, immortality, and eternity, ought there to find an appropriate place.

Peace then be to the London churchyards ; even to the pauper burial grounds. Spring renewing foliage may some day cast a soft shadow over these now saddening scenes, and help to illustrate the salutary lesson they ought to enforce. They may blossom as oases in the desert of this vast metropolis ; reverentially kept sacred to the unknown, and long departed, the fresh air may find a moment's current there, and the thoughts of the passer by, be checked in the feverish pursuit of material things, be recalled to the evanescent nature of all things—but one.

After satisfying himself that the creaking gate was securely fastened by the gaunt, skeleton key, the mourner returned to the grave digger's house. The

pale wife awaited him. She silently took the key, and asked no questions. No whys and wherefores, as to length of time and so forth. Woman's tact is great and intuitive, especially when blended with her sympathy. Her eyes shewed signs of recent tears, and the artist, though seemingly more than half absorbed in some deep grief of his own, observed this.

"Has the child awoke yet?"

"No, Sir."

"Remember what I said; if possible, remove him."

"You know, Sir, it's impossible."

"Not if you and your husband have the will; there are means and persons to assist you."

The husband at this moment entered: a poor, crushed, anxious man. And then the artist spoke to them of new lands, of a free world. He told them with gradual and increasing energy, an energy which caused his voice (first, so husky) to become clear and pleasant, of individuals (one, especially, a woman) standing ready to help the stifled, oppressed, and dying in the old country, to help them to the pure air, and generous soil. How these stand ready; how blessed and honoured, in helping to carry out the seemingly evident will, the merciful dispensation, that this world should be more equally peopled—this world, wide, fair, abundant, enough for all. How

the Church is awakening to the necessity of providing, as a good almoner, bread imperishable for her children in the distant regions, and how this very notion of distance (terrible to the finite) is being lessened to a comparative span by the allowed progress of mind and science.

He removed a dense cloud of ignorance from between his listeners and his subject, and after practically pointing out the pathway to hope, life, health, and liberty, concluded by giving himself as an example in the course he advocated.

"To-morrow," he again said, "I leave England ; probably, for ever. But one request I make," he added, "see, during the time you remain here, whether long or short, that my friend's grave is kept in as good order as circumstances will permit."

Slipping a piece of his newly acquired gold into the woman's hand, he departed.

CHAPTER III.

Moral Poison in Miserable Places—A Provincial Pallas—Lodgings
Let—A Lady in the Shell—Hunger.

HURRYING away back, through the dreary streets, the wanderer, after many windings and turnings, at length emerged into the more reputable portion of the neighbourhood faintly depicted. Every locality has its respectabilities, its notabilities, and its responsibilities. Most of the shops were closed, although their customers were generally of the number who steal out late at night, when wages have been paid, and children are in bed, to lay in the scanty store for the morrow. One door, however, still stood open; it was the entrance to a small circulating library.

Now, a small circulating library in a low neighbourhood is usually a prolific evil—especially if a newspaper emporium also. Cheap and revolting publications, political quackery—poisonous to the

mind as the adjoining advertising chemist's drugs may be to the body : hangman's notorieties, and appeals to bad passions are likely to be found here ; the very scum and refuse of misguided minds, the flattering and false doctrines of those who have been their own enemies, who desire, for company's sake, that others may fall into their dark abyss. But such an Alsatia, though likely enough to have been, was not here. The householder was a carpenter, and, like most of his fraternity, an honest, sober man ; his wife, once the daughter of a parish clerk far away in the country, and bemoaned by the people years and years ago. She was the librarian, having been originally incited to such a position by a legacy. Thirty years before, some well-meaning country maiden-ladies bequeathed her as many volumes, well preserved in their bindings, and immaculate in their contents. Childless, these books stood in the place of a nursery to the good woman ; and, by slow and sure degrees, her present literary progeny grew up about her, the later additions always being modelled after their quaint predecessors, as far as the very degenerate age would permit. The fame of the original promoters of the scheme, transplanted with their books, grew to something marvellous in the back parlour behind the shop in London.

There, Mrs. Harris-like, did their excellencæ survive, through the mouth-piece of their whilome pro-

tégée, herself now an elderly woman. They were the imaginary Lares, the something too good altogether, for the work-a-day world—ah, me!

Truth to say, the librarian's honours and listeners were more numerous than her readers; nevertheless, the admission of an illustrated paper and so forth, brought some grist to her mill, saying nothing of certain cottons, wools, pens, and paper, which also were for sale there.

But lately, more pilgrims had flocked to this Parnassus, than for many a long day; the lodgings, so long to be let, on the second floor, had been taken;—by whom? Aye, there was the question, the source of profit, of fresh notoriety to the librarian; and not the less so, as on this point she was enshrouded in oracular mystery, vouchsafing replies to anxious gossips, and former familiars, but in Sphinx-like riddles. Through the open door the artist passed.

In the room above, a very small, square, and barely furnished room, sat a young girl. By the solitary candle on the one deal table, it was evident she was of a different class to the place, and not in harmony with the few and very homely objects by which she was surrounded. Her dress, however, was of the plainest description—a coarse, black woollen gown. Her face was alarmingly pale, and her form emaciated, while the almost transparent hand, drooping listlessly beside her, bespoke excessive delicacy

of constitution, privation, or recent sickness. She sat so still, so motionless, with the eyes half-closed, that she might have been entranced, insensible, but for the large tears falling, at slow intervals, and unheeded. Poverty-stricken though the room, heart-stricken though its inhabitant, an indescribable halo of grace and refinement, seemed to hover around her; the small well-turned head, and smoothly-banded hair, may have had something to do with this; I know not; but certainly, she was a lady.

On the little table, a few drawing implements were scattered, but these looked as if cast down in despair more than with any intention of occupation.

In the grate, a very small fire was burning; it seemed carefully attended, but economized too painfully to emit the warmth so evidently necessary to the young girl; for every now and then, she shivered visibly.

As the night wore on, she seemed nervously awake to every sound; an opening door, the footsteps of the passer-by in the street, the occasional murmur of conversation below stairs caused her to start. Some sort of expectation evidently alternated with frequent disappointment. At length, she languidly rose; stirred the failing embers in the small grate, and trimmed the fast diminishing candle; its shortened dimensions proved how long she had watched and waited; but, when about to resume her seat, the

door opened, and the artist entered. She greeted him with a smile; but such a smile! So wistful it was, that, although beautiful, it failed to throw a moment's brightness over her wan face. Though expressive of welcome, it told as far as smile, or similitude of smile could tell, a tale of weariness and deep anxiety; that it might be interpreted also as interrogatory may be told by his words.

"You wonder, Amy, why I have been so long away from you?"

"Rather," she answered, "I dreaded that your absence would entail on you more fatigue than, at present, you are able to bear; also," she added, in a low thrilling tone, "I feared disappointment for you."

She was right as to incapacity for fatigue or disappointment; many days had passed, during which severe physical privation had been their mutual lot.

Oh! thou who dwellest in luxury, whose palate is pampered, whose appetite is provoked by gastronomic piquancy, walk into some of the byeways of the great city in which thy epicurean fancies may best be indulged, and, in future, as in the feast of Arbaces, behold the skeleton at thy table, the skeleton of want and woe.

Hunger may sound a very vulgar thing, or it may be the one qualification vainly required by the rich

and idle, but it is a fearful torment for those who have no remedy ; a fact so painful to bear or to behold, that it may appeal successfully to a judge more merciful than this unequal world, when the loaf has been stolen to be divided among the little ones, the perishing ones, at home.

A hint as to this common-place suffering might be read in either of those refined and delicate faces ; it peeped out even in the kindly glance with which he took her thin hand as he replied, in a tone that fain would be cheerful.

“You are ever over anxious for other’s welfare, dear Amy, but to-night, believe me, unnecessarily. My little mission has been quite successful ; I will not, however, talk more to you until you have congratulated me in the most acceptable manner, by partaking of some refreshment which our good landlady is preparing for us ; for,” he added, mournfully and low “you must be more weak and weary than I am.”

Quickly and quietly she pressed his hand to her lips ; then, as in submission to his will, she subsided into her former position and extreme stillness ; although through the fingers on which her head rested, tears forced their way more frequently than before. “Our good landlady,” did her bidding below with a right willing heart. That her hand would not have been closed against her young lodgers in

their implied need, may be guessed by the remarks with which she regaled her husband, a meek quiet man, while preparing their supper.

“Well, I’m afraid, poor things, they stand more in need of this, from the young gentleman’s manner, than I thought; not but I’ve often fancied their cupboard was empty; and I said something of the sort when they paid their rent last week: but with that sort of folk it is so difficult to deal. One never knows how to do them a kindness, however one’s heart may warm towards them; for, let them be ever so poor, there’s no denying their being gentleman and lady. Ah! well-a-day! I’m sure there’s many a true tale in the world far more shocking than those in books. Prepare their supper for once in a way? Why, of course, I would! Miss looks too ill to do this sort of thing herself, to say nothing of her not knowing how to do it properly; and, indeed, I’m afraid it won’t be long before she follows her brother. Depend upon it, she’ll never get over that loss; and when Mr. Eustace goes beyond seas, poor thing—poor thing!” And between her bustle of small preparation and deep sigh, the rest of her cogitations must be left for conjecture.

CHAPTER IV.

Propriety perks her Head—A Good Parson of no particular School—Liberal or Latitudinarian?—Truth and Love the World's Regenerators.

No tie of blood is there between those "above stairs;" but many strong sympathies. Early association and tender memories link them together. To explain the position so anomalous, therefore, of their residence beneath the same roof—to stop the outcry of outraged Conventionalism (for, although a worthy dame, she occasionally demeans herself and others by the use of slander—an unworthy perfume difficult to get rid of as that from the musk-cat), I must at once defend my favourites by the unimpeachable assurance of their perfect respectability. Furthermore, to satisfy the worthy lady above-named, of whom I presume my reader, albeit indulgent, to be a dutiful disciple, I will briefly trace their history.

The earliest days of Amy Lyle (such was the name of the young female) were as bright as love could make them. She was the daughter of a clergyman in Cornwall. Her mother died in giving her birth; but the deep grief of the widower found some solace in lavishing every care on the little ones so peculiarly bequeathed to him; and this, although his life was one of hard labour and self-denial.

His income was very small—fearfully so, when judged by comparison. Poor, however, he would have been, under any dispensation, in the uneven road of temporalities ecclesiastical; for his charitable disposition originally, and the deep and settled conviction for his Master's sake, he, the humble follower, ought not to be rich, would have made him so. The poor he certainly had always with him, in his parish, in his heart, in his prayers, and also, we may believe, in the blessings which returned into his own bosom. Literally, the poor abounded in his parish; situated in a mining district, his duties for many years, after induction, were peculiar. He had to address himself to a class who, though they saw his wonders, not in the deep, but in the bowels of the earth, had scarcely an idea above the beasts that perish. Fearless and persevering, the life of this man was spent in educating and inspiring with hope those hitherto neglected brethren: not only within the walls of the church did he enlighten the comparatively few who assembled there;

but without, he struggled with them in love; and, as love, true and acting, always must, he prevailed.

If, in thinking, we cannot tell the generation of a thought: if, in writing, the seed, good or evil, of a single sentence or word may be sown in the heart yet unborn; if, in action, the issue of our conduct may meet us on the shores of eternity, what must be the final result of a whole life, a long space, made up of thoughts, and words, and actions, and this the life of an anointed Priest—one in whom the sheaves of many are bound up, awaiting the harvest! The reflection is tremendous; in comparison to it the littleness of dissension as to mere outward form shrinks to its proper proportion and background. Not only precept, but example we want. Blessed—oh! how blessed to the many, when found in one appointed over us for this very thing.

Well, the man of whom I spoke succeeded in his parochial endeavours; but very different was the Christian liberality which helped on this success to the loose creed which saith something like.

“For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
His can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.”

No; while believing that truth is best embodied in, and set forth under one formula, he rejoiced in the hope that from one centre of unity might irradiate different manifestations.

In his schools, though reverencing the Church

Catechism as an interpretation sound and scriptural, he did not believe it essential to a child's salvation to repeat it before scarcely knowing who made him, or the beautiful world in which he found himself. He would have shrunk from it as mockery, if the little one were still unregenerate by baptism. Parentage and circumstance decided these things; and by toleration, though a toleration distinct from latitudinarianism, many were gently led who would not have been driven into the fold, large and comforting enough for all. He avoided the "dust of controversy." "The *dust* of controversy," as says a living author, "what is it but the *falsehood* flying off from all manner of conflicting true forces, and making such a loud dust-whirlwind, that so the truths alone may remain and embrace, brother-like, in some true resulting force!" Though for many years of his life his home had been desolate, he, rejoicing in the faith and hope of spiritual communion, walked unbent, though not unblanched, by time and sorrow, among his numerous flock. The time he could spare from his parish he devoted to *her* children, the little Amy and an elder brother.

The enthusiastic love borne by these children towards each other was not extraordinary, considering their isolation from suitable companions. Delicate in health, and refined in appearance, they were regarded by the poor parishioners as creatures of another sphere; and, though scarcely civilized, were some

of these, they would have vied in protecting the parson's children. The parochial and Sunday schools, empty in a former generation, were now well filled with a motley crew, assuming more the aspect of ragged schools, than the decorous propriety of orthodox institutions. This was, of course, owing to the peculiar nature of the district. Many of these youthful ones had been conjured up by the power of goodness from the world beneath, almost strangers to the pure air, the bright sunshine, the pleasant sights, sounds, and scents of this fair earth.

As the rector's son and daughter grew older, they passed much of their time in these schools, and had even a share of their labour allotted to them. And in this, the father was right, and they were useful; or rather, the excellent gifts of youth and innocence were useful, when brought in contact with those who possessed the one, but not always the other; nor was the collision to be feared for the young Christians; they walked with their whole armour bright and ready.

As our own conscience is the mirror by which the actions of another is reflected (especially in childhood) not a shade of evil could tarnish in this case; besides, the grim spectre actually disappeared before the power of simple, earnest truth and gentle forbearance. Aye; truth and love, what will ye not combined, effect? To you, is it given to regenerate the world.

CHAPTER V.

Brother and Sister—Strangers—A Slow Youth—The Castle—
The Dark River—Hope on, Hope ever—An Uncourteous
Invite.

WHEN Amy was about twelve years of age, and her brother some three years older, their father, with all his trust, could not shut out some anxiety as to their future in this world. It would have been his wish to have welcomed his son, by ordination, as a fellow labourer in his own peculiar duties of the vineyard, but the expenses of a collegiate career were quite beyond his very narrow means. For the girl, he felt more than ever the need of a mother's care. Not long, however, was this sense of need allowed to prey upon the good man's mind, for about this time a widow lady came to reside in his parish, possessing all the qualifications, besides good-will, to render her invaluable as friend and guide to the motherless Amy.

Economy was, doubtless, one of this lady's inducements in seeking an abode in a place so isolated; her having been habituated to the higher circles of society might be inferred from either her manner, appearance, or conversation, unostentatious though she was in each and all of these.

The hard-working parson availed himself of his position to penetrate into her modest home, and once within its walls he was soothed, invigorated, and refreshed by all he found there. The charm which true refinement conveys to the mind of man uncorrupt, he breathed there; in fact, he found in Mrs. Neville a Christian lady. She might have passed forty years of age, but this was more to be supposed from the appearance of the tall stripling, her son, than her own; and one elderly female servant formed her establishment.

Easily might it be perceived that in her boy every earthly hope was centred, and the 'Bless them both,' which grateful hearts soon caused honest lips to murmur as they passed, shewed how the poor had learned to understand their sympathy of soul, and had reason to know their co-operation in many a gracious work.

Even had "his reverence" been more accustomed to the great (little!) world, than had been the case for many a year with him, he would have found that

he was far from over estimation in his appreciation of Mrs. Neville.

That sorrow had laid its finger on her fine features he easily discerned; it was his peculiar vocation to recognize grief in all its phases; it was his talent to analyze it; and it was the passport to his tender consideration; for would he ever in this life, cease to mourn himself! But, in the brilliance which, although chastened, at times (and particularly in conversation with her son) was shed over this pale lady's lineaments, he perceived that her's, too, was not a hopeless sorrow, and rightly he conjectured that it originated in the loss of a husband, who, in his generation, had been an active member of that eternal communion to which she belonged, and which forbids us to think of the departed or the past, as separated or annihilated.

He soon learned that this husband had been an artist by profession, and that his talents, even in the world of competition, had become famous; although they had not enriched him, nor reconciled her family, which was noble in blood but narrow in prejudice, to her marriage with him.

The son inherited his father's talent to an extraordinary degree, and long summer days were passed by him in sketching the surrounding scenery, and studying the characters, countenances, and costumes

of its inhabitants ; and not only artistically, for he speculated on their wants, with the silent eagerness of a young philosopher, and, with a certain faith in "the good time coming," tried to apply the remedy for evil in whatever form it met him.

His infancy had been passed by the side of his father's easel, and in unconscious, but beautiful contemplation. From the dawn of observation, his experience had been as the inspiration of art. He could remember Italian skies, and wondrous galleries, and blue waters ; he could remember a home in England, perfect in all its combinations ; the grace of its arrangements was everywhere, even among the white drapery of his own little chamber. Grace of outline in such small things educates the eye. He could recall, with painful accuracy, the noble figure and countenance of his father ; such a form and face that romance might give to a hero, with which she fain would endow a genius, or clothe epic poetry in flesh. And the boy knew and loved ; as children and even dogs, somehow will know, and love in the case of a good man (or vice versâ) that this father of his was excellence embodied.

Indeed, the best key to the artist's works was faith in Omnipotent goodness. This was his inspiration, in its irradiation and, it touched the child by his side. Then the mother ; that pious, graceful, gracious woman ; whose truest elegance was the emanation

from purity within, and a mind cultivated, and ennobled by cultivation, to a degree unusual among her sex.

But after that precious childhood, came sorrow, the purifier. In the first dawn of manhood he was awoke by its cry; then, called by the soft voice of filial love, to comfort, to consider, to rise and act.

It is possible that this Eustace Neville might be scorned by many of the present youth of England, as a 'slow' young man, while being true to the first principles and impulses of a Christian and a gentleman; he proved, as time rolled on, heroic but not fashionable, if rated by many a contemporary standard. He was brave, though gentle; clever, though modest; witty, yet unobtrusive; full of what might be sneered at as '*crotchets*,' as to the ways and means of doing good,—even as an individual, to his fellow creatures. In fact, he was the fit son of a mother who believed herself responsible for something more than the flesh and blood. Next to inflicting a wound on his own moral being, was the fear of hurting her; nay, he could not do one without the other. But where there is one such youth to be found, think you there is no need for self-conquest? Believe you that there is exemption from the strife and struggle of the inner life! Nay; creed, not nature, must build an edifice such as this;

and before signs of superstructure, despite a good foundation-stone, there must have been much dirt and rubbish to clear away ; and even now—not yet—not yet—it is still in danger of being defaced by storms, or even scathed by the lightning-stroke.

No one who looked on Eustace Neville could suppose that he was a mere negative piece of goodness. Shall I describe him ? It were weakness so to do, especially at this his time of early youth ; to say, in the ordinary cant of such descriptions, that his eye was fiery, and his form erect, would be, perhaps, to vulgarize the effect of passions by which genius is sometimes accompanied, or even peculiarly beset ; or to parody the outer sign of conquest, when the love of truth is uppermost.

But I linger too long in these backward glances, and those years possess little to tell, yet one episode must be noticed in this chapter of the young artist's early life.

On the summit of a hill, casting its deep shadow on the village near which he dwelt, was a mansion ; it was called by the peasantry "the Castle;" and surely, the battlemented wings of the old building, its lancet casements, and lofty turrets, might justify this imposing name to the very few who had seen it. The master of this goodly pile was unknown, but rumour chose to tell strange tales of him. By some it was said that he was haunted by an evil con-

science; that a lady had been carried up to this eyrie long years ago; but, though her white form was seen once and again, and though her light glimmered in the oriel window some weeks, it went out one night quite suddenly, and never gleamed again.

Some said that Avarice was the rusty key that would not turn in the prison-house door, and others affirmed that the owner was a madman inflicting on himself (always for his sins of course) the penalty of almost solitary confinement.

Certainly, however, not quite solitary; for ever and anon, a vision of youthful grace flitted forth from the dreary domicile. When this young girl was installed there, or how, nobody seemed to know, but the relationship in which she was said to stand towards the grim guardian certainly proved him anxious to claim kith and kin to flesh and blood; she was called his niece.

Fairy like, none knew her age precisely; but judging from the rare intervals in which she had been seen in childhood; and, unfairy like, judging by her youth, it was now supposed she was about seventeen. Even good Parson Lyle who had access to every home, and whose influence even penetrated the bowels of the earth, holding gentle sway in the hearts of the miners there, even he seemed not to know more of the mysterious Lord of the

Hill, except that great part of the revenue of that underground world found its way into his coffers.

But the sun shone, and the showers fell on the soft greensward of the lofty elevation, and the rainbows arched over the stately timber which, untouched for many years, cast deep shadows there, as much as on Mrs. Neville's lowly roof, lying off the far side of the straggling and poor village which intervened. At the foot of this mount, ran a deep, dark, rapid river, forming a natural boundary-mark to the estate. Whatever might have been the original rights of property, none now dared, or cared, to pass over it by means of the heavy wooden bridge; much less to saunter by its side, to fish, or swim in it.

In fact on the people's side there was an iron rail, proclaiming to those who might wander into this glen, that the inhabitants of the water were preserved; on the other, the undulating meadow land, sloping to its brink, had no boundary but the long rushes, beneath which, if fishes basked, they must have rejoiced in their uninvaded privacy; as under the saving sway of philosopher Pythagorean, their lives could not have been held more sacred.

It has been boldly remarked that, however good a man's title deeds may be, he and his, can hardly lay claim to the land as his own *certainly*, and for ever, the hired labourer's sweat and toil

may be only for the time, and without these what would Mother Earth say to the proud son who had thought to honour her by calling her after his name? But, though the landowner may hedge himself in, what might be said of the exclusive claim to salmon yet unspawned in the ever-flowing stream, and this, where the water sources are evidently set for purposes of public health, recreation, business or food? This side is mine, therefore that can't be thine, is a dogma against which something more than fish and water may, in some cases, probably rebel.

It was not, therefore, as a disciple of Isaac Walton that Eustace Neville, one summer's day, reposed on the plebeian side of this Rubicon, between the Castle and the village. Perhaps he was intending to sketch one of the noble trees on the rising ground beyond; perhaps he was indulging in one of those day dreams which form no slight nor unimportant part of the artist's life; that state, when drawn up, as it were, from this dusty world, and enveloped in ethereal atmosphere, men, and men's motives beneath, shrink to a proper proportion, as a wider and a brighter world is seen above. In such moments, the real and ideal change places, and England—wise utilitarianism is done away with.

Utility! Worse than useless after all, if it hold man back from his real destiny, by teaching him only the ways and means of a life uncertain and most un-

satisfactory, when blind to its moral beauty and eternal purposes. The fruits of this tree, Utility, if ungrafted, has in its core the bitterness of death.

Well, then, I am ready to admit that Eustace Neville was idle that summer's day, that the pencil he held was but an excuse for half-unconscious thought, that the wave of the trees, their lights and shadows had bewitched him. Those lights and shadows !

Suddenly, as by a shock, the dreamer was brought back to life. In sleep or accidental death, it is said, that hope or anguish, the experience of a life-time, may be crowded into a moment ; and thus did wonder, fear, anxiety, and even terror, find a sudden place ; but they impelled him to action.

The rapid and downward flight of a horse on the greensward hill opposite, might have been unheard, but the shriek of its rider, as it madly neared the deep and dangerous stream, startled him. He saw that the rider was a woman, powerless to save herself. Then, one moment's breathless suspense, the giddy consciousness of immediate peril—another shriek, a heavy splash, and horse and rider plunged into the deep water a few yards from where the artist stood.

As by a flash of lightning he saw that the rider had fallen at the same moment from the saddle, and simultaneously Eustace bounded forward to save her.

He could swim well, but was encumbered by his clothes, while the object he strove to rescue, was fast floated onward by the rapid current. Twice his grasp was eluded. In agony he remembered that at a very short distance beyond, the water took a suddenly precipitous course, forming a fall to a lower level; this imminent peril towards which they were nearing, inspired him, if possible, with fresh energy. Again he put forth his arm, and this time near enough to grasp the plume of the hat; alas! it loosened from its fastening, remaining in his clutch, while its late wearer, now unconscious, was drifted onward to destruction. An instant between Time and Eternity so lost! The current seemed to rush on faster—its noise became deafening; but, though almost breathless, he bravely struggled between life and death; and, at last, just as the latter seemed to triumph, he once more boldly struck out, and, on the very verge of the fall, succeeded in clutching her clothes. To fight against the water and drag his seemingly lifeless burthen to the shore, was but the work of a minute, extatic in its sense of relief. Too excited to be conscious of exhaustion, he laid her on the grass, treading himself for the first time, the ground of that domain on which he had gazed so often.

But now came anguish that he had been too late in the rescue. He cried aloud for help, although

despairing that anybody would hear him in that lonely spot. Then kneeling down, he proceeded to chafe the small cold hands, and put aside the mass of dark hair, which had fallen, wet and heavy, over the face. When he observed how young and beautiful, even in seeming death, that face was, a fresh feeling of unavailing despair crept over him; but hope on, hope ever! At this moment, help appeared in the person of a stout, elderly man dressed as a game-keeper. He approached them rapidly, alarmed and brought in that direction, as subsequently explained, by the appearance of the horse, which, after swimming ashore, had passed him on its way back to the Castle—wild, wet, and with broken trappings. Fearing some terrible accident, the man had hurried on in the direction from which the creature came, and Eustace Neville's cry had helped to guide him.

But when he saw the form outstretched on the grass, a cry of horror escaped him. No question did he ask; nay, he seemed not to notice the one who had risked his own life in the attempted preservation of another; for half a second, he stood pale and terror-stricken, with hands upraised; then stooping down and muttering, "But it's not possible she's dead!" he tenderly raised that slight figure in his arms, listened for the breath which no longer animated it, and for the first time turning to Eustace,

"Follow me, Sir," he said, "you may be of use."

And then he carried the insensible girl to a cottage, which, situated at a short distance up the height, was so hidden by the thick foliage of the old trees, that nobody would have suspected a human habitation lay ensconced there.

An old woman, aroused by the sudden opening of the heavy door, started up, and ejaculated when beholding the burthen brought across her threshold; from the glance of inquiry, however, she darted at Eustace, it was evident that some curiosity mingled with her dismay; but the man stopped cries and questions, by hurrying her on to help, suggesting the remedies her home afforded, and which she proceeded to apply.

"Heaven help their success!" exclaimed the old man, and then moved towards Eustace; "What is your name, Sir?" he now asked. This being answered, he looked significantly towards the door. The brave and sensitive youth inferred that he was not wanted, his anxiety as to the result was intense, but without another word he prepared to depart.

"You shall hear," said the man interpreting his look; then, as if recollecting himself, "Take this key," and he drew one from his pocket, "and let yourself out by the gate on the south road—afterwards close the gate, lock it, and throw the key back into the park; I shall find it." And thus was the youth dismissed.

A severe illness attacked the widow's son, soon after his plunge into the stream; most probably the damp clothes, so long worn, had something to do with the malady. Not looking back to causes, however, but with a trust rooted in faith, his good and gentle mother watched him through the crisis of pain and fever. During this period of anxiety, Mrs. Neville still found leisure for the companionship of Amy Lyle and her brother.

In lives like her's, where feeling takes the place of action, a sacrifice like this is a greater thing than those in the bustle and turmoil of the world might imagine. But both the clergyman's children repaid the lady for her care and kindness by an affection amounting to something akin to reverence, and Amy especially gave signs of that genial influence by a rapid and graceful developement. She was just at the age when every new impression is almost indelible for the future, when taste and appreciation are warm but unmoulded, as regards the things of outer life, but the maternal watchfulness of Mrs. Neville was already repaid. As to the boy, his highest earthly emulation was to resemble Eustace. Eustace taught him to paint; Eustace clothed his thoughts with words; Eustace seemed to have dived into the mysteries of the life which began to stir within, and to hold the key of the treasure house.

It may, therefore, be supposed that this brother and sister were heartfelt in their sympathy with the present suffering and sorrow. But at length came the dawn; and the morning star of hope once risen, youth and health soon asserted their rights.

Not long after the gloomy period just mentioned, the old man, who had come to the rescue by the river side, called on Eustace, and delivered to him, with much form and solemnity, a note of which he was the bearer. It was written in a large angular character, and on a very capacious sheet of paper, although only containing the few words :

“If the young gentleman who saved Miss Lester from drowning would call at the Castle, I should be glad to thank him. Signed

“RICHARD LESTER.”

This quaint epistle much embarrassed Mr. Neville; it corroborated his belief that the young lady was the local Bluebeard's niece, but the idea of receiving thanks from him or any other person, and going on purpose to receive them, was painful. But how refuse? When churl or misanthrope unbends to man, it is the duty of a good neighbour to go something more than half way to meet his advances. So, subduing the sensitive delicacy which is likely to own pride as its parent, if it would but look back for its

generation, he promised compliance as soon as he was permitted to walk in the open air.

The old man, to whom the note containing this reply, couched in concise but respectful words, was delivered, turned it over between his finger and thumb, as if hardly satisfied.

"Humph!" he muttered, at last, "I wish he could have come now, while my master's in the humour for his company; maybe the fit won't last long," and after this ungracious comment, he added; "I'll tell you what, young gentleman, if you can tell me the time your doctor will let you out, I'll go up the Mount with you; if you try alone, I won't answer but you fail to see Sir Richard Lester."

Eustace winced slightly at these uncourteous sounding words, but a moment's reflection proved that they were sincerely, though roughly intended as kindness to himself, while their somewhat pompous conclusion announced, in its tone, respect for an eccentric master. Before he had time, however, to make any reply, Mrs. Neville entered the room where the colloquy was taking place; in a few words her son explained its purport, and in doing so there was something apologetic in his manner, as to the man and his behaviour; quickly catching the truth of character, as was her wont, wherever met, the lady turned towards the messenger, who, feeling the influence of her presence, instantly doffed his cap.

"My son would be happy to accompany you now," she said, "were he not prevented by my fear as to his exerting himself too soon after severe illness; in a week, if his health continue to amend, he will be happy to call on Sir Richard Lester; you can come and tell him, then, if the arrangement be agreeable to your master."

The old man looked curiously from mother to son, and then bowing deferentially to both, "I hope to come," he said, and departed.

Now this little incident would not have been worth the detail, but for one peculiarity under the circumstances; that was, Mrs. Neville did not make any allusion, even by implication, as to the almost certain cause of that illness which might indeed have rendered earth a desert to her. A mind, discoloured by one shade of vulgarity, would have allowed this fact to peep out; nay, perhaps, could not have resisted enforcing it on the man's understanding, provoked by his odd and independent manner. But it was not an easy task to incense either this lady or her son; still less, to compel them to proclaim themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

The Misanthrope's Mansion—Armour not from Wardour Street—
The Tone of a Good Thing Spoilt—Aphrodite Abdicated, and
Psyche Pursued—Face to Face with a Foe.

THE day came, and with it, the man ; who, with some taciturnity, but more solemnity, carried off Eustace to the abode, which, if distinguished or defiled, by one half that rumour had whispered for the last quarter of a century, would have been an eligible place of introduction for Mrs. Radcliffe herself.

As they ascended the hill, Mr. Neville was struck by the deep silence and increasing loneliness of the place. The road they traversed seemed quite uncared for, and many a large patch of green moss reminded him that carriage wheels were never heard there. The trees seemed to have forgotten the sound of the axe, as their wide-spread arms embraced the earth,

while the deep, dark shadows of the firs and cedars were cast athwart the path; a huge branch here and there almost impeding progress up the hill, and the resinous sap perceptible in the heavy, quiet atmosphere.

A broken archway at the entrance of the avenue turning off towards the house, completed the uninhabited appearance of the scene, and near this ruin was a group of aspen trees, their light leaves rustling, and their branches shivering, as if in memory of the past; this ceaseless murmur, this sighing round the delapidated Gothic fabric, bemoaning, as it were, the pageantry and pomp of which it was the remnant. At this spot, a group of deer came trotting up from a deep and wooded glen; the creatures, generally so shy and timid, had no fear; but seemed to expect something more than the gratification of curiosity with which Eustace fancied they viewed a stranger with their soft eyes; and that this was the case proved true, for his companion, who had become more and more silent, said, in a low tone,

“Miss Beatrice feeds them here.”

It was easy to suppose that Beatrice was the Miss Lester who had been rescued from the stream rolling in the valley below, and the remembrance of that young face and form, in the rigidity of seeming death, came back to Eustace Neville; and then he thankfully dwelt upon her restoration, depicting, by imagi-

nation, what she would be when instinct with life and intelligence.

But what a place was this solitude, with its mysteries, for the abode of youth !

No sign of care or culture was visible, even now, as they drew nearer the dwelling ; no hum nor buzz of human life and sympathy. The song of the birds seemed hushed, while even sunshine could not penetrate the increasing masses of shadow cast by the umbrageous trees. Walking beneath this canopy, the building was scarcely visible, except by partial glimpses, until they were close upon it ; and its aspect was then, indeed, cold, cheerless, lifeless, and forbidding.

Built of dark grey stone, with towers, and turrets, and narrow windows (as tradition, before said, had proclaimed in the world below) and of an age when architecture was at once picturesque and substantial, it would have been difficult for it to fall into crumbling decay ; but the greenish hue around the windows, and more than one delapidated casement told of the many storms which had dashed against it since preservative measures had been thought of. The form of the building was circular, and the view or views, its lofty site commanded were fine, when, standing beneath the heavy and curiously carved entrance. Eustace could look over the tops of the trees from whose shade he had just emerged, and

estimate the extent, through natural vistas to the right and left, of this wide domain of pasture land, and woodland; a perfect wilderness for lack of cultivation, but possessing, to the artist's eye, full many a charm of deep glen, and broken foreground, and hazy distance. And on the landscape, the young man had leisure to gaze, for beneath the portico his guide had left him, while effecting an entrance for himself through some other way. Curiosity was roused; the silence and gloom of the scene around far exceeded anything that might have been anticipated, even though aware of the misanthropic character of its owner. The stones beneath the visitor's feet were moss-grown, while the heavy ivy clinging to the battlements was a fit dwelling for the owl. The village beneath was invisible, but, as the church was situated on rising ground, Eustace could just discern its steeple, gilded by a ray of sunshine. He thought of Parson Lyle, as of some one afar off, he thought of the miners and their miseries in the world beneath, and unwilling to condemn, though the discrepancy was painful, he marvelled if any possible circumstances could exonerate a man in thus shutting out his duties, barring his gates against every human claim, and preventing the very ground, as it were, bringing forth abundantly aught but thistles, briars and thorns.

Was this the abode of a Midas, who "longing

for gold, had insulted the Olympians?" it was said that Sir Richard Lester, however, "had got gold," that 'whatever he once had touched had become gold;' but certainly, with or without the long ears of the old fable, it seemed that he was little the better for it.

"Yes—the celestial music tones must be misjudged here," thought Eustace "but if the master of this place be Midas, what is his niece? surely she cannot personify that other ancient fable of the sphynx—for youth must be articulate!" Reverie was here disturbed by the portal behind him slowly creaking on its heavy, rusty, hinges.

The visitor started, and turning, beheld an old woman with starched coif and kerchief standing in the opening by the side of the man who had led him hither. Grim and taciturn, they both appeared to suit the place.

Mr. Neville crossed the threshold, and while the door was being again bolted and barred, looked around with much interest. The hall in which he stood, was large, though not very lofty; the floor was of granite, quaintly inlaid in different colours; the recesses were numerous; they might more properly be called Gothic niches of very dark carved wood, and in some of these stood figures in old armour; something resembling, but not quite so orderly looking, as those Wardour Street ances-

tors that are occasionally purchased, and persuaded to appear in Tyburnia and other Metropolitan districts. Various weapons were arranged with some care against the black, heavy, panelling which descended from the ceiling to the ground; and on the backs of the old chairs, quaint, hard and uncomfortable, might be observed heraldic emblazonments of which a lion rampant was most prominent. The ivy mantling without the Gothic windows on either side the door, permitted but little light to struggle through the small diamond shaped panes, and the whole appearance was massive, ancient, and gloomy.

Silently following his guide (the woman had disappeared) Eustace next traversed a long, low, passage; the floor seemed uneven beneath his feet, but the walls were arranged in a similar manner to the entrance; ancestors, armour, and heraldry, still finding a place there; but neither daylight nor time were allowed for examination, as this place was but faintly illumined through the door by which they had passed from the outer apartment where the light was already sufficiently subdued; and the man quickened his pace. Emerging from this narrow way, Eustace found himself with astonishment, in what the old Romans might have considered the 'Atrium;' this was a large circular space, with the day streaming through the roof;

though softened by glass of rich and rainbow tints, on floor and pillars of polished marble.

A fountain of beautiful design, though now dry and silent, stood in the centre, surrounded by large marble vases, in which, though flowers no longer bloomed, there was much to admire as to pure and classic design. Superb groups of statuary were standing on pedestals between the pillars, while four doorways, visible in the walls of Fresco, were panelled with carving in fruit and flowers, exquisitely executed.

The unexpected grace and contrast of this singular spot, startled the guest, and recalled to him a scene of his childhood in Italy, especially as he looked up, and beheld the rich and ornamented compartments of the roof. Even in its present desolation, it was easy to understand how refreshing such a retreat would be from the heat of summer, while an English winter would be unfelt here, with the temperature raised to meet the requirements of exotics both in Nature and Art; and yet, harmoniously beautiful as might be the soft light, the chiselled forms, the sparkling waters, fragrant flowers, and marble, mosaic floor, the artist felt a painful sense of incongruity in this sudden appearance of an Aladdin's palace, in an old and feudal residence. He doubted the correctness of a taste which could have thus broken the tone of a thing so good, and interesting in itself, by anything even beautiful as

this scene; foreign, indeed, to the idea of the grim founders and ancestors yonder.

It is probable that this doubt was shared by his companion; for although he permitted Mr. Neville to pause for a minute before a sculptured group, he sighed impatiently, and shook his head, as if in condemnation. Wondering as to whither the four doors might lead, but presuming that they would conduct to regions of grace and elegance of which this might form the centre, the stranger was not permitted to pass through either of them, but was led on by a way of which he guessed not.

The man touched one of the ornamented panels of the wall, which, quietly sliding back, admitted them to a large sombre room, hung with tapestry of the time before machinery had moved the magic loom. Here, stately dames of old, might have wiled away the hours of their lord's absence; happy, like Penelope, in that faith which is, perhaps, the most acceptable boon to the imperious rulers of woman's destiny—faith in them.

For Crusader, counsellor, or convict, it is the same; this tribute is demanded and paid, to the consolation of one party, though not always by the common sense of the other. There was no furniture in this tapestried chamber; the warlike men and quaint damsels on the wall were reflected, however, by the polished oak floor; which, seemingly, but

seldom echoed the foot of an intruder. This shining surface being traversed, the visitor next found himself in a very long and wide picture gallery, having passed beneath the heavy folds of Arras, which the guide had silently held aside as an indication to proceed. This picture gallery far exceeded anything of the sort which Eustace might have expected; it formed a large semi-circle, from which might be inferred that the range of gothic windows facing the wall, were originally intended to command other views of the vast park by which this singular building was enclosed. In the recesses beneath these windows, were couches of every date and form; some covered, and others of dark crimson velvet, which time had failed to fade. A long piece of rich, soft, and quiet carpet, laid down the centre, prevented the possibility of a footstep being heard, and the deep repose which might have hushed even a merry child, was increased by the almost solemn stillness of some stately cypress trees, forming a perfect grove without; overshadowing a broad terrace which lay beneath this part of the building.

Tables there were, too, standing about; antique, curious, and some convenient, but all bare; and at regular distances between the windows, pedestals of white marble, on some of which were statues of great beauty, while others were unoccupied, looking as if some 'blushing and mysterious Psyche, or Aphrodite,

the representative of purely material life,' had been removed. The abode, probably, was no longer tenable for either of those, and they might have voluntarily vacated. But, on the wall, an unbroken succession of portraits proved that valour and beauty had been the heritage of this house for many a generation.

The guide permitted not leisure for Eustace to examine the numerous smaller pictures, whose value he detected by an artist's glance; but conspicuous above all, were the heroes and dames, who, for a longer or shorter period, had held their place in this old gallery. Here he beheld the warriors who had worn the armour in the hall, the ladies who had helped to clasp it, and then retired to weep or work in the tapestry chamber, or pray in the chapel whose vicinity was proclaimed by the deep chimes of noon which, at this moment, penetrated the silence hitherto unbroken.

Then came the representatives of another era; the soldier's determination was gradually exchanged for the *abandon* of the merry monarch's reign. The locks of the ladies, so jealously shaded by the coif of their grandmothers, were permitted to wander unrestrained, and the prim boddice was unloosed; while the male representatives of this time, seemed enervated by the "*indigne mollesse plus redoutable que tous les fléaux.*" But this period was but one

of transition to another, and, perhaps, a better state of things than that which had preceded it; judging from the gradually increasing tone of thought in the faces which followed, the sword was exchanged for the pen; the courage of the Crusader for the wisdom of council; and in the fairer portraits could be read the tale of an educated emancipation. If the men had been 'diligent in business,' and stood before kings, the female heads of this later era might remind that, "although a friend and companion never meet amiss, yet above all, is a wife with her husband."

This was not the first time that Eustace had observed an increased earnestness of expression as the sign of a liberal and later age, and he was now reflecting how progress in the outer world may have helped to render intelligent domestic companionship more necessary and dear; when he suddenly halted, in surprise, before a picture veiled in black. This, painfully and abruptly, terminated the series. The outline of a female form was just discernible beneath the semi-transparent material by which it was so carefully and closely draped; but any curiosity which might have been felt was repressed and routed by the sharp pull which his companion gave to his sleeve; while, in a stern and admonitory manner, he silently pointed to a door near which they stood.

In another moment, Mr. Neville was left alone; his guide having vanished with the seeming intention

of paving the way to an introduction to the living descendant of those whose countenances, callings, and characters he had passingly noticed; and who now, viewed from this furthest end of the gallery, appeared to look down, through a long perspective, at the stranger about to enter the presence of their flesh and blood.

Soon the old servant returned, and noiselessly beckoned the visitor forward. He then led Eustace through an ante-room; small, and dim with the heavy hangings of the one window, and the coloured glass of yellow tint of which it was composed. Then he pushed open a door covered with baize; beyond this, a massive oak panelling appeared; but an aperture was quietly and quickly effected by means of some spring which the man knew how and where to touch; and then Eustace Neville found that his guide had disappeared, and that he stood alone, and face to face, with Sir Richard Lester.

CHAPTER VII.

Saturnine Seclusion—Parson or Paragon?—"The Glory, not the Thing"—"Isms"—Clap-trap—Plant or Paramour?

For a moment, neither spoke; and in that moment Eustace observed that the tone and arrangement of this gloomy and secluded chamber were in harmony with the old entrance hall, and the cypress grove visible without. Indeed, the dark and heavy branches quite excluded the possibility of any view beyond; all idea of grace and ease was evidently carefully banished; the quaint-looking books, the fire-place, the chairs, the walls, the windows, carried the imagination back some centuries.

This minute, almost involuntary, observation, however, permitted no details; it was interrupted by the low growl of a dog; and then Eustace saw, that at the feet of the inhabitant of this apartment, was a large mastiff.

The aged-looking man in the chair opposite, now roused himself from a volume on which he had been hitherto intent, not to greet his invited guest, but (without looking up) to stroke re-assuringly, the large head of the animal, which, as if in surprised inquiry, had risen, and gazed into its master's face. The dog then again crouching down, Sir Richard leaned back, and looked up slowly and scrutinizingly into the face of the youth he had summoned before him. Eustace, impressed with the oddity of such a proceeding and situation, was not abashed ; although his own skill as a physiognomist was puzzled by the complex, singular face, which now contemplated him. The eyes were large, deep set, and mournful ; the cavities around them were deeper than even the more than three-score years of their possessor might justify. The brows above them were still dark, presenting a singular, but not unpleasing contrast to the perfectly white hair, which was not thinned by age, but fell almost to the shoulders ; but the frown into which these brows were knitted, producing many a furrow on the broad forehead, ponderously overclouded any notion of gentleness which the eyes alone might seem to argue. The cheeks were very thin and sallow, while the expression of the mouth was rendered uncertain by the long beard which, in silence, concealed it. The nose was aquiline and haughty ; its powerful outline might have been supposed to denominate an

ambition singularly unfulfilled in the dreary existence of this recluse.

Taken altogether, the face was painful ; originally it might have been very handsome, but the emaciation, and the many lines by which it was crossed and recrossed, hinted some destiny which had marred the qualities, that, separately, still struggled for utterance there.

"By what unsanctified furnace has this man been seared and scathed?" thought Eustace ; and then he was reminded that this mute and mutual investigation was over, by Sir Richard quietly folding his arms across his chest, (thus wrapping himself still more completely in the folds of the dark, loose garment which enveloped him) and asking, as if in continuation of a train of thought :

"Did you, when careless of life, know that it was Beatrice Lester for whom you risked it?"

Eustace answered, "No."

The tone of the misanthrope's voice was not, at first, repulsive. Melancholy and deep, it seemed to harmonize with the character of the eyes when in repose ; but gradually it changed in the ensuing conversation, becoming higher and discordant, while his whole face assumed a sinister expression, strangely alternating, however, with one of fatigue or weariness.

"Whom did you imagine then," he continued, "could be within these grounds?"

Eustace. "The common impulse of humanity left me no time for reflection."

Sir Richard. "Acting then on what you call 'a common impulse,' but which *I* deny as common, would you have been equally reckless to save one of your own sex, or a woman or child of the lowest rank?"

Eustace. "Undoubtedly."

Sir Richard. "You take credit to yourself, then, if this be true, for the benevolence of your nature?"

Eustace. "Far from it; an impulse being in its nature, sudden and unpremeditated, deserves no credit; and even benevolence, though admitting self-culture, must first be implanted by a higher hand; teaching us, therefore, humility, as recipient, before we can become the giver."

Sir Richard. "Your language, boy, savours of the pulpit or the school. Is your father a parson, or a pedagogue?"

Eustace (with emotion). "My father was an artist—he is now dead."

Sir Richard (sarcastically). "Then you have been in the leading-strings of a woman?"

Eustace. "Of my mother." (With glowing cheek and manly pride).

Here the young man was about to leave the room and its eccentric inhabitant; but before he could effect the haughty exit for which he was pre-

pared, and for which he surely could not be blamed, Sir Richard rejoined, as if not observing his intention—

“Of your mother—ah, yes; and, doubtless, if she be indeed a female paragon, she has taught you, second-hand, the tenets of a favourite parson.”

“Sir!” exclaimed Mr. Neville, advancing a step towards him, “Sir! Your questions surprise me, and would pain, if they did not offend; but the words you have just uttered may be accepted—and literally.

“Aha! you take me, *en rigueur*, do you young man?” interposed Sir Richard with a low laugh which grated harshly on his listener’s ear; and then, dropping down into an attitude of grim attention, with one hand to his ear, but with a strange mocking spirit about his mouth, at variance with his deep set melancholy eyes, “you are bold, too, for a home-bred lad, but you may proceed in your literal translation.”

“Merely to shew, then,” answered Eustace, with an enthusiasm which dissipated his previous sternness, “that a good woman may be blessed in learning the Gospel from its appointed teacher, and be enabled, practically, to demonstrate its tenets to her child, and illustrate its truths even beyond her own roof.”

Sir Richard answered in a low, questioning tone, as if forgetful, for the moment, of another’s presence :

"Ah! women like this sort of thing; their pruriency of imagination they take as the inward prompting of a mission; the glibness of their tongues, as the sign of a vocation; anything, in short, better than to obey in the shade." Then, suddenly rousing himself, he asked:

"Was your father famous?"

Eustace. "In his profession—yes."

Sir Richard. "Then, I suppose, your mother seemed to adopt him and his career with enthusiasm?" Then, not waiting for an answer, nor noticing the flushed cheek before him, he continued, half in soliloquy:

"An unreflected light did never yet
Dazzle the vision feminine."

"Ugh—that's true—true," and again, with the sardonic laugh, he added:

"Wit, too, and wisdom that's admired by all.
They can admire the glory, not the thing."

Eustace fancied, at this moment, that the quotation gave him a clue to the debased opinions of this evidently unhappy man; his kind heart, pitying trouble under every form, and deploring its unsanctified effects, immediately forgave the previous insult, and he answered in a gentle tone,

"Too often, that may be true, Sir Richard ; but, in the case of my parents, the fact was different ; my mother sacrificed wealth, friends, and station, to share my father's lot ; he was then poor and unknown. Content to share the destiny of one beloved, and ever looking on high, poverty did not depress, nor fame elate her. Though pleased, for his sake, when celebrity and appreciation came, she always did and will, prefer the retirement you just now deprecated as uncongenial to her sex. Her virtues, the fruit of a pure religion, are sweetest in the shade."

Sir Richard. "That you have had a sentimental instructress, I should know from your talk ; doubtless, she is also learned enough to have instructed you in the progress of civilization, and the rights of so-called '*isms*,' which catch and tangle in a clap-trap world ?"

Eustace. "Faith and hope in humanity, Sir Richard, it were dangerous to dispense with ; nor ought we, surely, to cease to hope that progress is towards the spread of Liberty, Love, and Truth ? As to the '*isms*' you name, false though they seem, yet may they not help to prove this ?"

Sir Richard. "To prove what ?"

Eustace. "That there is a restless craving abroad, shewing a faith ready and eager for something, or somebody, though doomed, (because not based on the one imperishable truth) to frequent disappoint-

ment. This casting about, proves, I think, an impatience of the narrow boundary of old world-wise philosophy, and falsely called utilitarianism. To quote from a celebrated author—‘no chaos can continue chaotic with a soul in it.’ ”

Sir Richard. “I recognize your quotation, young man, although denying its point, and deriding its application. If ‘worth and truth’ there be in England, it is inaudible as well as ‘inarticulate,’ as your author terms it; and, while questioning his sanity, let me ask you where is that deep feeling of justice, that he talks of, ‘of the eternal nature of justice,’ looking out among us everywhere, while favour is the key to advancement, instead of merit; while routine, or selfishness do their work, and will effect their worst, at no distant day; while men love vain shows, pulling the strings of the puppet which they set up, and then fall down to worship. And if in the midst of the babble and confusion, a man step forth clothed in the panoply of a hero, and can get a hearing, self-aggrandizement, prompts him. If pretending to be the friend of peace, and champion of order, ten to one but he will use the confidence reposed in him to lay a ‘huge mine destined to spread devastation.’ ”

Eustace. “But may not a new era arise from this state of things? Do not a growing notoriety, and the disgust in which you share, prove that,

after all, justice is very articulate, becoming each day more audible? May not good be worked out of evil in states as well as in individuals? may not the star of social Truth already have risen, if we would but go down deep enough into the well to see it? The corruption and decay around us may be fertilizing—”

Sir Richard. “To produce again a hydra-headed Liberty whose annals are traced with the finger of blood? These things, boy, are beyond you. If alive and single-minded ten years hence (regarded, therefore, as a moral monster if launched in the world) you will better appreciate the distaste I now feel at the clap-trap by which you are likely to be caught; in the meanwhile, take up, if you will, one dogma after another, to fling away in disgust; after being the football of sects you will understand the self seeking of schisms; and, unable to find a resting place for head or heart, you will comprehend something of the philosophy of seeking a quiet corner, there to await the necessity, more merciful than stern, which reclaims all to kindred dust and ashes.”

Eustace was not at all appalled; Hope and Faith were too strong within him to crouch before the false shadows of this picture. “But might I not,” he continued, “though baffled and disappointed, still exclaim, with one of former time,

‘I love Truth and not sects ;’ and while clinging to the divine principle of the truest Wisdom, acknowledge that it is often well to be bruised in the hand by the reed we lean on, being taught, thereby, to cast aside material help ?”

Sir Richard. “You are already too self-confident, young Sir, and your quotation may be made to turn against you, by fact. Does Petrarch, who prated thus of Truth, manifest an ennobling influence in his sickly Odes to a paragon, paramour, or plant (’tis difficult to determine which) one, perhaps, worthy of his muse as the other ?”

“I think so ;” modestly answered the youth, “fantastic though the case seems, the real and ideal (a virtuous woman, it is believed on the best authority) weaned him from gross pleasures ; and after standing for some time as a beacon light of self-denial was withdrawn at a time when probably needed no longer.”

Sir Richard laughed a most unpleasant laugh ; and with a contemptuous wave of the hand, said in a harsh unpleasant voice. “Faugh ! this woman fallacy is worse than the hero-worship. Let me advise you, boy, as this same visionary was of yore admonished, to lower your tone ; to place yourself more on a level with things as they are ; otherwise, phantoms, offspring of an idle brain, will pursue you to destruction.”

It was impossible to remonstrate; some chord had evidently been touched, which vibrating discordantly, had irritated this unhappy old man beyond the bounds of reason; he added, after a moment's pause, with intense bitterness. "I sent for you to thank you; and, perhaps, to serve you—unhappy though the life you have preserved may be. I wished to know whether the impulse you acknowledge originated in the common root of most men's actions—the hope of reward. I believe not. Farewell,"

CHAPTER VIII.

The Dry Fountain—Thanks—From whence come the “Lights in the Eyes?”—The Duenna Discontent.

AN unfailing instinct warned the guest against any attempt at reply or farewell, and the old mastiff, as if in confirmation, once more raised his head, and, by a low growl, bade him depart. But, ere turning towards the part of the room by which he had entered, he involuntarily cast one more glance towards the old man, and that moment sufficed to shew him relapsed into an attitude of thought so deep, that he seemed already oblivious of the recent interruption, except that the still deeper furrows on the brow, the still sterner compression of the lip, proved that the visit he had solicited had not been soothing or salutary in its influence.

Suddenly, as if by some mesmeric call, the aged servant reappeared, and holding aside the heavy

drapery silently but decisively motioned for the guest to depart. Eustace obeyed, and, without a word on either side, they slowly retraced their steps through the long picture gallery, although the visitor was conscious of a sharp, suspicious glance, cast towards him, when passing by the veiled portrait. After threading their way through the intervening quaint apartments, they emerged once more into the large open space with its forms of classic beauty, and harmony of colours, some of which were now especially glowing beneath the rays of the sun which penetrated the glass roof; while the statues in the niches where thrown, by contrast, into that shade, which is, perhaps, the best medium for the contemplation of the sculptor's art.

But not on any of these did Eustace gaze; his wonder and delight were rivetted to the centre of this strange place, where, standing, bathed in prismatic hues, which fell with the sunbeams from the stained glass above, was a living form surpassing in its interest any of the silent groups in the background. It was Beatrice Lester; she whom he had lately risked his life to save, by whose side he had knelt in dread and hope, and for whose sake he had just undergone the ungenial cross-questioning of the Misanthrope.

Whether he thought much, or aught, of any of these things at this moment, is doubtful, although

their memory may have helped the sensation of joy which thrilled the young man on beholding, so unexpectedly, the life-inspired form and face which suddenly were turned towards him. But whether by him forgotten, the remembrance of how much she owed to him was proclaimed by Beatrice, as, advancing, and holding out her hand in welcome, she quietly and distinctly said :

“ I heard, Mr. Neville, that you were here : I was glad that my uncle should thank my preserver—will you forgive me for adding the feeble expression of my own gratitude ? ”

There was a slight hesitation in the last few words, the embarrassment evidently of sincere emotion, which rendered their tone more charming ; this bashfulness, however, was infectious. For almost the first time in his life, Eustace felt indubitably *shy* ; wit and language failed him in proportion as his observation became more keen ; while holding the hand extended towards him, he looked with delight on the upraised, animated, but touching face, eloquent with gratitude. For a moment, he faltered ; and then said with a strange simplicity, “ Grateful ! you cannot be so grateful as I am.”

And then they moved, hand in hand, towards the gracefully formed, but dry and silent fountain. Here they stood for a few moments, when the girl said, as if in answer to his thoughts,

"Yes, it is desolate now : but I am going to plant flowers here—violets above all," she added, releasing her hand, and opening a small basket which she held in the other.

"Modest and fragrant," answered Eustace, looking at the roots.

"And lowly, but not abased," she rejoined.

At this instant, the taciturn old servant, who had been the guide, approached nearer. He glanced uneasily round him ; his hat was removed, as if in acknowledgment of the young lady's presence, but it was evident that some feeling stronger even than this, determined him to interrupt the unexpected interview. Beatrice looked towards him deprecatingly ; she seemed to discern his thoughts, or to remember the rules he feared infringing.

"But I am so glad to thank him," she said, as if in extenuation, "that is," again raising her eyes to Eustace, "I should be, if I could."

Simple words, but thrilling earnestness. Nothing to read, everything to hear—by those, at least, to whom they might be addressed. And then, what a face ! More singular, perhaps, than perfectly beautiful, but not to be forgotten with the sunshine just touching the upraised eyes with that peculiar brilliance which the artist knows so well how to appreciate, and, by simple but most effective touches, to pourtray : those extra lights on the orbs even of an

ordinary face render humanity radiant, and the painter's work complete. It was difficult to decide as to the rest of the features ; the complexion was very pale, rendered still more so by an abundance of heavy dark hair, requiring better arrangement for a more perfect view of the countenance. The form of this young creature, too, was slight, but scarcely rounded and developed enough, beneath the almost shapeless, dark dress for beauty. But all this was for memory, more than conscious observation at the time ; the eyes rivetted attention, and raised speculation as to their owner, while the thrilling, somewhat tremulous tones of the voice, seemed to bespeak a nature intense, poetic, earnest ; a moral harmony, an inward glow ; than which the sunshine from without on the principal feature of the face caused the lesser radiance.

Another figure now joined the group. From a gently closing door, on the opposite side, approached an aged gentlewoman. Neither startled, nor surprised, at the appearance of the stranger, she quietly advanced until she stood beside Beatrice, while, lightly resting her hand on her shoulder, she asked :

“ Is this Mr. Neville ? ”

A smile was the reply—

“ And I need not ask if you have expressed your gratitude ? ”

Another smile from the young girl, a dropping of

the eyelids, and a little shake of the head, as if in the negative.

"But the heart would prompt an endeavour, I am certain," answered the lady, turning towards Eustace, who now suddenly roused himself from his painful position to exclaim :

"So small a service is sadly over-rated ; the act was so simple that I am ashamed to find myself here in reference to it ;" and his confusion being evident, the elder lady interpolated.

"We will drop the subject, for," added she, smiling, and drawing Beatrice more closely to her side, "a difference of opinion is not always a good beginning to an acquaintance, especially when that acquaintance must necessarily be a very short one."

The conclusion thoroughly recalled Eustace Neville to himself, and the necessity of instant departure.

In one glance he observed, and ever afterwards remembered the elder lady, as she stood beside her charge. Her banded white hair, over which was closely drawn a lace cap, her fine forehead, with eyebrows still dark, and rather strongly marked, the one wrinkle most conspicuous being that of Thought, which helped to draw them more closely together ; the eyes soft, full, grey, but deeply sunken ; and a nose more aquiline than altogether accorded with the small mouth, were taken in at a glance, together with her long

dress, and the thin white hand, with one superb diamond glittering on its forefinger, drawing towards her the dark and now silent girl, with a kind but peremptory movement, which indicated the close of the interview, without the word "Farewell!"—the only sound again uttered, and that by the duenna.

And this being acknowledged in the most ordinary manner by the guest, he again silently followed the old man, who had impatiently awaited him.

That visit left a strange trace on this part of the young man's life. He clung more than ever to his mother's society, but he could not define the language with which he pursued his ordinary avocations. It might have been the effect of recent illness; perhaps, the foreshadow of some coming great event in his life; or, possibly, the Misanthrope's words may have left an ungenial touch. There was a partial pause in his former habit of deep study, but his mind took a deeper tone, and his aspirations became more difficult of utterance. Meanwhile, in the efforts of the art to which, from his cradle he had been dedicated, he grew more discontented; it would seem as if some higher perception shewed him, painfully, the short comings of such endeavours,—as if some faith in moral beauty and dignity, daily growing stronger, rendered an imperfect reflection, under any form, barren, dull, foolish, and unprofitable.

CHAPTER IX.

Wistful Watchfulness—Small Stones Cement the Building—
Impulses and Individuality—Impotence—Mother's Intuition—
Passive Agency.

AMY LYLE, now in her sixteenth year, and daily more companionable to his mother (and it would have been difficult, in his estimation, to award higher praise) looked often and wistfully at him from beneath her fair curls, when, unconscious of her presence, he sat beside her as of old. She longed to cheer him, although uncertain whether he was depressed; while, at other times, the very gentle affection with which he treated her, increased her growing sense of distance between them. Her brother was now absent. With extreme resignation, but a dejection he could not altogether overcome, Parson Lyle had acknowledged the fallacy of keeping his son comparatively unoccupied by wishes that were never likely to be fulfilled, and so had accepted a very

humble post for him in London ; that of schoolmaster to one of its many admirable institutions.

“If his Heavenly Father had willed that he should have been His appointed Minister, He would have provided the means ;” exclaimed the old man, “it is not for me to decide *where*, and *how*, my boy may be most useful in his generation, for it is the Master who appoints to each his work. The building, so perfectly cemented together, disdains not the smaller stones ; only let him remember the foundation, and look upwards to the glory which rests on its summit.”

But the father’s strength failed fast, and there was none ordained to help him. His eyes were often moist when he thought of his absent child, and how he had hoped that he would have continued his work ; though a smile played around the lips, wont to utter kind and consoling things to all, when his son’s letters spoke of hope, happiness, and usefulness in the state to which he had been called.

Happy state of usefulness—glorious life ! for true it seems that great thoughts, underlying and animating small duties, is the true idea of practical Christianity ; and that whatever be the meanness of a man’s occupation, he may discharge and prosecute it on principles common with “Michael, or Gabriel, or any of the highest spirits of Heaven.”

Eustace Neville thought so; and perhaps it was partly because he did think so, in behalf of his absent friend, that he became, under compelled comparative indolence, restless in mind beneath the calm of his external life. Blaming himself for this, he was in danger of "a wretched species of egotism," a "morbid self-anatomy," likely to degenerate to superstition, or something worse, if not warded off by timely incident. True, his hereditary profession, hereditary in almost every condition of his existence, might have been enough to take him out of himself in the contemplation of Nature and her sublimity; but the scenes around him were familiar from long association, though constantly diversified, as Nature ever is, by every change of season, every passing light and shadow, every breath of wind.

But the individuality of this young man was very thorough; the balance was even; in him was to be found the active, in proportion to the contemplative. He was painfully impressed, too, with the exceeding poverty of the district around him, though an enthusiastic believer in that "better time coming unto all," to which the efforts of the *individual* may contribute so largely. Without vanity, therefore, but cast down by a sense of impotence in position, and means, to carry out a single scheme in behalf of himself and others, he grew more than ever dissatisfied, at the

age of twenty, with the really fine results of his artistic endeavours.

Under any circumstances, this discontent in such things, is inevitable. Let us accept it as a sign of our immortal destiny. The nearer we reach perfection here below, the further we seem from it in our own estimation; "it is ever sought—ever seized—ever seizable." His pictures were sold in London, occasionally, and by the proceeds (which, by the bye, only partially reached the hands of the artist, having to be passed through others, only too likely to retain a share) he was enabled to contribute to his mother's household comforts. These were moments of bliss to him, and to her as an earnest of her boy's success; but she, with a single-hearted woman's unfailing tact, discerned that a change, for the welfare of her beloved, must come o'er the spirit of his dream; or rather—not of his dream (that would ever be the same, only progressive) but of his outer life.

Perhaps I cannot better express this mother's insight into his character than by the words of an author, who seems to have felt and suffered before he could describe so well that "there are some who unite, in equal degrees, individuality active, and individuality introspective, in whom reflection is alike an enjoyment and a minister to action, and in whom action is as much an experiment that reflection seeks

as a consequence to which the active faculties impel." She therefore hoped for any honourable opportunity which might offer, for this fine nature to be developed in all its bearings ; and more especially as she was conscious of having helped to foster and encourage the double impulse. Without any visible opening, or field of action, the widow dreamed of the glorious harmony which these various tones, brought forth together by the skilful touch of circumstance, would produce ; but she did not remember sufficiently that there were features portentous of grief as well as gladness. She penetrated the intervening cloud, and beheld a hero, without an entire contemplation of the fire which is the ordeal—and the sword which is the test of such.

A merciful dispensation, this oblivion in her behalf. She was fast, though unconsciously, approaching that goal, from whence, if permitted to look back upon earth and its struggles, the idea of good and evil, joy or sorrow—as its pilgrims sometimes understand the terms—must be reversed.

Here, oblivious that our condition is progressive, we sit by the way-side, forgetful that the stones which bruise our feet are capable, by turning them, of paving our onward way, or being piled as a monitory monument to those who may come after. There, the secret of the Alchemy is perfected. But, in the meanwhile, she panted for an *opportunity* ; she

wondered how she could assist the development of that individuality over every sign of which she had watched and prayed from the time it was committed to her care ; not thinking that though still a powerful agent in unfolding the mystery, she would be a passive one. This Christian mother's mission was fulfilled ; and so, when no longer needed, the support her counsel and companionship had hitherto afforded, was withdrawn.

CHAPTER X.

A Sister-Friend—Absent, but Present—Weakness and Strength—
“The Ample Roof.”—The Artist Benumbed—A Pupil—The
Return from a Long Walk—Father and Son—Sitting in the
Porch.

SHE died. Oh! the agony of this unexpected blow to the orphan youth! Oh! the smallness, in comparison, of the hopes and fears, the seeming wickedness of the discontent which had recently, but secretly, beset him, while still in possession of that, which seemed, by the contrast of his present desolation, beyond all comparison. How they had loved each other, this mother and son! Remember, how, for the greater part of his life, they had been the world, the very home, to each other! How she had become part of his religion, identifying his most solemn impressions with the joy she had taught him to seek and find, in daily occupation. Then the fear lest she might have observed the shadows which, from some cause impenetrable to himself,

had latterly crossed his spirit, even when in her society. He did not know that she had studied him more closely, and comprehended him more thoroughly than he had done himself. He did not know that his idiosyncrasy was recognised in its entirety by her, and merely kept a secret from its owner; the first reserve she had ever maintained towards him, until the opportunity for its complete exercise might arise; and still less did he know that the feelings for which he now reproached himself so bitterly, were as natural as the buds to the trees, or the blossoms; harbingers of fruit in riper season.

In the bewilderment of his great grief, he turned, even for support, to the young Amy Lyle. She was to him, more than ever, as a sister; for had she not been his mother's loved companion, cheering and aiding her, when he had been abstracted, or perhaps morose?

He had stood with this gentle creature, too, beside the couch of her they both had loved so well, in her last hours; her low tones had blessed them both, her fast fading vision had rested on them. Even now, they seemed still to feel her presence, perhaps I ought not merely to say seemed, for who knows how much of the purified may linger still around the beloved? To take an ordinary ground, the *influence* is still felt of those who have gone before, for good or evil.

The authorized bearer of good tidings was not absent, you may be sure, from this house of mourning. Though his bodily strength had long been waning, his spiritual vision was clearer than ever. He did not mourn as the young. "Yet a little while," was his cry, and then he thought and spoke of re-union with the departed. He remembered his own one great loss in life, and how his hope was daily now more abounding than his sorrow had ever been; how the canker worm of regret had gradually become extinct beneath the potent light, which, from a little glimmer of dawn, had touched all things with refulgence, and was now reaching something like the splendour of noon day, filling all creation with beauty, and inspiring a joyous universal hymn. He felt that a retreat for weary mortality was provided, in the building not made by man's device, into which this light penetrating, rested on and irradiated the simplest and lowest of its myriad stones. Beneath its "ample roof," as a living poet has soothingly said, "he heard the same divine service chanted in a different dialect of the same universal language. He found different chapels there, and beheld men passing from one to the other, but he did not view them with intolerance from his own point of view; he beheld, principally, even in those who were on the other side, afar off, zeal, self-devotion, heavenly aspirations, and endless deeds of charity."

Ah! if we could all thus pierce through the darkness that "bigotry, fanaticism, and intolerance," cast around us!

He repeated to Eustace many an anecdote related by Mrs. Neville, of her earlier life and its vicissitudes, but all tending to shew how the great part of her treasure had long been garnered up "where neither moth nor rust could corrupt," and to prove the steadiness of her hope which was full of immortality. There was ample opportunity for conversations so comforting, as Eustace consented to take up his abode at the Parsonage, in return for the long period during which Amy had made his mother's house her home.

Duty and time gradually regained their sway, but some of the sweetest hours were those during which these three friends, talked of her for whom they still wore the external signs of mourning. Her charities, her chastened cheerfulness, her former sorrows, her varied talents and perfect demeanour, needed no better memorial than that found in the living, loving hearts which watched over her grave. But still the son had not yet recovered from the shock of his loss. For a time, the idea of entire action was benumbed. He painted, however, more than ever, but entirely from imagination. The colouring of his mind was deepened as proved by his works; but his cheek grew pale, and his step languid.

Amy observed all this, but was far from divining

the combination at work for, or against, her constant companion. This was beyond her youth and inexperience; but her guileless, affectionate heart was daily more interested. Hence, she became a diligent student, under the instruction of Eustace, in his art.

Self-reproach had intensified his instropection. He often retired into "the depths of his own being," to find, and cast out if need be, what was wrong there; and so often, when she sat by his side, making her first studies of the objects and effects he had introduced to her notice, his manner became so absent, that she almost feared his disapprobation. He never thought of making her the sharer of his thoughts, for in his estimation she was a mere child; and equally did he refrain from discussing the mystery of Self with his aged and revered friend; for believing, erroneously, that the error lay in himself alone, and opposed to the doctrine of content so often preached, and always practised, by the good old man, he failed in this case to try the universality of the great tenets which alone are capable of making us comprehend, and properly exercise, the individuality which, whatever its peculiarity, can never be beyond their reach. His fear of being misinterpreted was very great, but another reason deterred him. Daily observation, quickened by a recently painful experience, revealed to him that the venerable pastor was soon to be removed from the scene of his

labours; and confidence in his love made him hesitate to harass or disturb the short remainder of his time here below. This insight had determined him, more than anything else, to remain at the Parsonage; the difficulty was, how to prepare Amy for what he believed as speedily inevitable. One day, when they were together, returning from a long ramble, of which charity had been the object, he thus addressed her.

"Amy, do you not think that your father would be pleased if your brother, who has now been so long absent, were to pay him a visit!"

"My brother!" answered the girl in surprise, "you know he cannot leave his duty; and, besides, he could not afford so long a journey."

"As to Charlie not leaving his duty," replied Eustace, "I would gladly relieve him of it, if necessary, for two or three weeks; and the expense," he added, hesitatingly, "might easily be managed."

Amy did not ask *how*; but the recollection that one of Mr. Neville's pictures had lately been sold, caused a sudden colour to suffuse her fair face; but, after a moment's pause, she inquired, almost in a mournful tone, "you go to London, Eustace?"

"Certainly," he promptly answered, "if no other means could be found for Charles to visit his father just now. I do really wish, exceedingly, dear Amy, that this could be managed."

Struck by the earnest tone of the last few words, she suddenly stopped and looked into his face.

"Just now!" she repeated. "You wish this so suddenly and exceedingly?" Then clutching her companion's arm, and speaking more rapidly: "Oh! Eustace, you have some great reason for this. I feel it, and know it from your look and manner more than your words." Then, as he continued silent, though he had taken her hand in his, "Do you think that father is ill?"

Eustace did not deny; but replied, as he laid his other hand on her youthful head, from which the straw hat had fallen.

"I may be mistaken, dear child; perhaps I am altogether wrong to startle and grieve you thus. Remember that my love for your father may exaggerate my view of his case, to say nothing of the trial through which we were both called so unexpectedly to pass, and—

"Then you do—yes, you really do believe that he is ill?" she asked; but her utterance was broken by sobs.

"I know," he answered, "that he has suffered from attacks, of which I should have been ignorant as yourself, but for one having occurred in my presence, while I was writing for him in his little study. When he recovered, he uttered some pious ejaculation, and then, 'My boy, my Charlie,' he murmured, 'oh! if

he were but here !' Afterwards, he revived more rapidly than might have been expected, and spoke to me with his usual gentleness ; but I ascertained, in the course of our subsequent conversation, that this was not the first seizure."

The young man refrained from adding that he had since spoken to the medical man who had attended his mother, having one day accidentally encountered him in a visit to a fever-laden hut on the Moor, and that it was by his instrumentality that the seemingly incidental conversation which that gentleman had since held with Parson Lyle had been brought about. Neither did he hint that the case was pronounced to be beyond the reach of mortal help, and that the daily tenure of that useful life was most precarious.

He was pained to the heart by the effect his partial statement had produced in his young companion, and now only sought to soothe her. Amy had sunk down on the grassy bank by which they had been standing. She was weeping violently. For a time he wisely permitted her tears to flow, walking a few paces from her. Then returning, he gently said :

"This ought not to be, dear Amy, even if our worst fears be realized ; and who can say in such a case ? Remember that for this end he has lived, or rather for this beginning ; that what to us would be loss, to him would be gain ; what for us, in our short-sightedness, would be sorrow, for him

would be joy exceeding all we can imagine; what to us would be the grave, to him would be the Gate of Life. Remember how long his path has been of Faith; how his every thought has been away from this perishable scene, and how, thus looking ever beyond the present world—its joy and sorrow, sin or suffering have been reversed.”

“But those that will be left behind?” she murmured.

“And they too will be cared for, depend upon it,” he answered, “even to the most ignorant miner’s child beneath the ground on which we stand, by the same hand which knoweth when to bestow, and when to withdraw. Dearest Amy,” he continued with increasing earnestness, “let not your grief be thus. After all, it may be premature: but, even if not, let not your father be disturbed by a doubt as to the whole effect of his teaching; for this would be the case were he to witness aught but calm resignation in the hearts for which he has most constantly prayed, that they might be spiritualized in every interpretation.”

“No, no,” she answered; “it is only now. Do not fear, dear Eustace. You shall see that his teaching and your kindness are not forgotten; and Charlie—”

“Shall come,” he rejoined. “I will write to him without alarming him. I will take his place for any

length of time, if necessary. And now, Amy, look forward to his arrival with pleasure. You have so often longed for him ; and he will be with you as of old—perhaps even to greet, not the Tyrant, but the Liberator.

Eustace kept his word, although it was found unnecessary that he should absent himself from these dear friends.

A short interval was permitted to Charles Lyle in consideration of his unremitting and strenuous exertions. I was going to say a *holiday*, for so, in the ordinary sense, it might have appeared to a stranger, at his home, after his arrival.

His father did not ask why he came, nor how ; neither did he allude to his sufferings, although the external evidence of them was startlingly visible to one who had not daily watched the alteration. Everything was cheerful, composed, and in order ; and delighted was Charles to enjoy the society of Eustace Neville, although, over him, too, had passed some indescribable change, or *phase*. The sick and poor were visited, their wants and remedies discussed, the schools taught, and the sun and moon alternately cast their beams through the honey-suckle porch of the Parsonage, where the aged man and his three young especially beloved ones were wont to sit and discourse, during periods of real rest—refreshing rest—to the mind as well as the body.

CHAPTER XI.

Oh ! sweet Country !—Meeting of Sky and Earth—Death in Masquerade—Did you ever Read a Real Autobiography?—Poor crowd by the Wayside—The Last Fiend—When Fine Manners are not Formidable to the Poor—A Valid Aristocrat—Blessing better than Cursing—A Good Set-off—A True Principle can't perish—An Improvised Procession—Partings from Place and People.

THE country. Oh ! how delicious to poor Charles Lyle, after the close confinement of London and his peculiar occupation ! Had the flowers ever so bloomed before—was their fragrance ever so perfect—the sun so bright—the air so pure—the shade of the trees so perfect ! Perhaps he, too, could hardly realize the idea of death and decay, amid such a scene. And if so, I do not think he was far wrong in thinking of such things as alien—for “ motion or change, and identity or rest, are the first and second secrets of Nature : motion and rest.”

He had been accustomed, lately, to London ; the sight of funereal pomp passing through the streets on the one side, and the advertisements of "Economic Burials" on the other. He had lodged near a church-yard, and marvelled at its desecration, but not at the number of its tenants. But here, in these open fields, beneath this blue sky, with the song of birds, and sweet companionship, the destroyer seemed so far off ! And so he was, Charles Lyle.

And yet there was nothing very wonderful in the landscape itself ; nothing, at all events, so wonderful as "the necessity of being beautiful under which every landscape lies." The fact was in the "moral sensibility" of the observer. I agree—and let the reader agree too—that we exaggerate the praises of local scenery. "In every landscape the point of astonishment is the meeting of *the sky and the earth*, and that is seen from the top of the first hillock, as well as from the top of the Alleghanies. The stars at night stoop down over the brownest, homeliest common, with all the spiritual magnificence which they shed on the Campagna, or on the marble deserts of Egypt. The uprolled clouds, and the colours of morning and evening, will transfigure maples and alders."

The difference between landscape, and landscape is small, but there is great difference between the beholders. But, with all the beauty discerned by the

son, the scene was, comparatively, but a poor prison-house for the father.

I have read of a man, "pale, gentle, elegant, and illustrious," who "died seated with a bowl of milk on his knee, of which his ceasing to live did not spill a drop; a departure which, it seemed, after the event happened, might have been foretold of this attenuated philosophical gentleman." On the other hand, examples are known of the great terror inspired in minds of undoubted strength and power, by the consideration of the inevitable; how the learned and courageous have shrunk from the idea of earthly "finality." We all know instances, again, of the ancient calm in presence of the Destroyer, or even of sparkling *mots* made by the witty on the occasion of his reception. But all these instances are hollow and unsatisfactory; each to be accounted for, principally, by the leading passion of life being unsubdued to the end; also, by mortality leaving untouched some peculiar chord of the nervous system in the one, or by disease, though unsuspected, thrilling the overcharged brain with horror, in the other; by the love of fame, and by hope, beyond hope, of deliverance—offspring of a nature sanguine and thoughtless to the end. But all these are far from pleasing to contemplate.

Although, in some mysterious way, the material and spiritual work together in the tabernacle of the

body, helping, hindering, counteracting; offering, perhaps, the very means, most unsuspected by the world in a quiet uneventful life, of fierce temptation, abject humiliation, or sublime victory—a history of inner life, so stirring and wonderful that, if written candidly, it would thrill the reader more than any autobiography of externals that ever was published, yet it is inexpressibly painful to contemplate aught *but* the spirit, when the body, with its faculties or functions, is so soon to be restored to the worm and dust.

And the contemplation is divine in such a case as that of Parson Lyle. All nature seemed to rejoice in the event. His children were around him, and afterwards they did not feel separated. The parishioners mourned loudly for the loss of their friend and pastor.

The rough man, the poorly-clad woman, the sun-burnt child, assembled on the road-side with a wailing lamentation. He had gone; he who had humanized them, blessed them, instructed them, prayed with them, fed them, baptized them, or buried their dead. Who would ever be unto them as he had been, this good Parson Lyle? Who would hallow their homes, their poor hearths, and let in the sunshine of kindness on the dark despair of their condition? Might not the husbands return to drunkenness and brutality, the children learn the

ways of wickedness, the women forget their modesty, and the little society become outraged? To have felt confidence in such a friend, to have yielded to him, by confession compelled by persuasive gentleness, their hearts' secrets—and now, to have lost him and his comforting support! And whither had he carried the knowledge of wrongs like theirs?

On this question they scarcely dwell. With the English poor—the very poor—the hard, grinding, daily life, leaves but little comparative time for thought beyond immediate necessity. Therefore it is, that kindness is the best exponent of a lofty doctrine. They often rebel against the teacher because they think he does not understand *them*; they turn their backs on the Church because they fancy there is no place, or only an invidious place for *them*; they rob their employers because they believe they are of a different race from themselves; they withdraw, or withhold, their children from school, because they think the instruction is something apart from them, or their wants.

But once manage to impress these same brothers and sisters by sympathy—sympathy unobtrusive, because *sincere*—and the great work is begun, its progress is certain, and its result is eternal. Sincerity and Reality must always be popular, and not only in the teachers of religion, but in laymen and ladies. “Fine manners show themselves formidable

to the uncultivated man," says Emerson ; but this is only when they are false, assumed, not springing from the heart ; as in another place says the same author : " If the aristocrat is only valid in fashionable circles, and not with truckmen, he will never be a leader in fashion ; and if the man of the people cannot speak on equal terms with the gentleman, so that the gentleman shall perceive that he is already really of his own order, he is not to be feared." And if the clergyman, let it be especially remembered, can only preach, in dainty gloves, to well-attired congregations, he has, somehow, missed, or mistaken, his high vocation. But to return to the uncouth crowd by the wayside.

" He is gone, and we shall never find such another," they cried ; and then, suddenly, a woman, young, but pinched with care, a baby at her breast, and a curly-headed boy at her feet, turned to the side on which stood the residence of Sir Richard Lester, and uplifting the bony forefinger of her right hand towards the wooded eminence, she pointed in that direction, and exclaimed :

" Now, if it had been *that* man, who of us would have cared ? Living on the land that nobody tills — shutting up the river that it does nobody good — keeping us all out from a place that would be large enough to feed us and our children, if the good will were done ; making our husbands work like slaves

under ground to keep him above in selfishness and ease. Oh ! that his conscience may be his —”

“Stop,” exclaimed a deep voice by her side, while the uplifted hand was caught, and gently laid on the head of the boy, who had looked up at her in surprise. “Stop; what is this you are doing? Invoking evil in the presence of the dead? And how can you, or I, or any one else, my friend, judge of the living? How do we know what sorrow may dwell on the top of that hill? Perhaps it is far greater, sterner, more terrible, than the hard work below the reach of daylight, or even the starvation on the common yonder.”

It was Eustace Neville who had penetrated the crowd; he had stopped to speak a cheerful word to more than one half-sullen rough heart on his way; but had hurried on, attracted by the shrill tones of the woman, and the movement of excitement immediately round her.

Seeing that she was silent, and moodily rocking her body to and fro, to still the babe in her arms.

“How do you know,” he continued, turning to the group of listeners, “but that the good man, whose funeral is coming, was permitted, for a time, to dwell among you as a ‘set off’ for the other?” (Eustace always, as far as possible, adapted his language in his communications with the people). “How do you know but that he may be followed by

another as gentle?" (Here cries of "No, no," were murmured). "It is possible," continued Eustace; "because it was not so much the man, as his love—the good within him—that you knew. Now the love was God's love; it cannot leave us for a moment, without our own fault, whoever may be its minister; and so do not grieve as those who have no faith nor hope in its truth. And what would *he* have thought," he added, turning to the woman, "to have found just now, how soon not only that hope and faith, but the charity also—the charity which the poor ought to shew towards the rich, as much as the rich towards the poor, are forgotten, when he is not in your sight? And may he not be very near you now? At all events, my friends, we will all look forward to joining him some day, when tears and hard work, and starvation shall cease; and now you certainly have his children among you for a time. Honour them, in proportion to their love for you, by shewing that you do not forget the teaching of your friend—their father."

"It was yer honour's mother's son that spoke there," exclaimed an old Irishwoman in the crowd; "and sure, what you've said is thrue every word of it; a' an blessin' on ye for it—for blessin's a dale betther than cursin' any day, Betty," she added, turning to the first speaker; "but hush—whish—for here they come, and—"

A solemn pause ensued ; every breath was suspended for a moment ; the rough caps were removed from the men's heads, the children stopped in their play, and a sob burst from the young woman who had spoken so excitedly, as the simple funeral emerged from the parsonage gate, the two or three mourners following it, walking ; the only one to be recognised, Charlie Lyle.

" Will you not come too ?" asked Eustace in a low voice ; but low as the tone was, the sound was heard, understood, and unanimously responded to by the motley crew, who, with him as their leader, quietly and reverently fell into an orderly procession, thus meeting the corpse by a turn in the road, near which they had assembled. They followed in solemn array ; the ranks increased, but the silence remained unbroken as they proceeded—a goodly sight of youth and age, strength and decrepitude, impelled by one feeling—love for the pious dead.

That day was never forgotten by the inhabitants of this secluded place ; and Parson Lyle's quiet grave will never want ornament while there are women and children to tend it ; nor is an epitaph needed to his memory while language lasts to perpetuate the " truth" which will be handed down—a mighty heir-loom in many a squalid home there. The subsequent fate of that far-off district will be glanced at hereafter ; but we, my reader, must desert it now

with those who had lived and loved there. By the time the Autumn leaves had fallen, Amy and Charles, with their brother-like friend, Eustace, found themselves in London. It is needless to recapitulate the heart-rending scenes of farewell from place and people—the last going to church, the last visit to the churchyard, the last lessons in the schools, the last evening by the dear old fireside, and the last sleep, for Amy, in the little white bed beside which she had knelt night and morning from infancy. There is scarcely any life but has known the anguish of such partings, or is ignorant of the deeply touching nature of the clumsily-offered tributes from those in very humble life on such occasions. To those who have known, and felt, and suffered, the description would fall far short of the memory ; and to those who have not yet experienced anything of the sort, it would appear over-drawn.

CHAPTER XII.

London Lodgings—A Common Fund—Academic Routine—
Genius “dashed,” but not dead—Mistaken Inspiration—
Woman’s Transformation—Love *versus* Selfishness.

BUT all could understand something of the bewilderment of Amy Lyle, when finding herself in a close lodging in a low part of London. She had seen poverty, and had heard of vice as its frequent hand-maid; but there was, at first, something unexpectedly revolting, and utterly depressing, in the aspect of things around her. Perhaps, too, as the spring advanced, the want of fresh air and sunshine, with flowers and trees, for the first time in her life, was the cause of that headache and languor to which she had formerly been a stranger, but from which she was now scarcely ever free. It certainly was good, however, that the extreme narrowness of their united means, rendered the idea of profitable employment essential to her.

The fear of being too heavy a burthen on her brother, made her, more than ever, an attentive pupil to her friend. From some cause, the sale of Eustace Neville's pictures had rather diminished than increased, and hence he had but too ample time to devote to the poor girl's instruction. On this instruction she staked her future. Without it, she knew little she could offer to teach in a family; while her extreme youth, and even childish appearance, prevented the success of any public situation such as that held by her brother. But, to secure its aid, she unconsciously risked her happiness.

Eustace had freely thrown the small sum his mother had accumulated into the common domestic fund; and often a little comfort or enjoyment was procured by his aid, to which Amy and her brother would otherwise have been strangers. At this period, Mr. Neville became an authorized student at the Academy. But, somehow, he did not make those rapid strides in this path of orthodoxy he had fondly expected. Perhaps it was that the rule in his case was reversed, by beginning in Italy instead of ending there; perhaps the induction of his own nature and circumstances, had already taught that philosophy of the beautiful which ought to be the end and aim of the artist's school; but, from whatever cause, he was disappointed in his own organized efforts; and neither was he observed as remarkable by those

about him in anything but a seemingly proud reserve, which held him aloof from the "jolly good fellows" who were treading the same path as himself. In fact, though not very free of expression in his presence, these young votaries of high art commented in terms more strong, than elegant or courteous, on the stranger—for such he continued to them—in his absence.

A period, this, of humiliation and disappointment to Eustace Neville. As usual, he imagined the fault to be in himself, and he began even to depreciate, or doubt, the rich gift within him. Sometimes, the words of Sir Richard Lester would echo back, as in mockery of all he had once hoped or aspired to; and foot-sore, dusty, weary with the day's work, and distance to and from his lowly lodging, away amid the crowd—the crowd not only of human beings, but of things uncongenial and most unsympathizing—he would look forward to Amy's smile of welcome, as the only ray of sunshine in this, his once anticipated London life.

She was now sufficiently advanced in his art to occupy the intervals of loneliness by making copies, and in none of these did she excel, as in those from his own works. Sometimes, but rarely, she studied at the National Gallery, but though her master was generally her companion there, she fell far short of the skilful reproductions by which she was wont to

employ herself in the stifling lodging on the other side of the water. There, free from interruption, she seemed, during the long days, to drink in the draughts of his genius; the time was not solitary to her thus spent. Far from it; carried away by something stronger than herself, inspired, as it were, by something beyond the narrow walls, she lived more and more in a world of beauty and happiness (she believed it merely the beauty and happiness of art, a recognition of her vocation) and never stopped in her astonishing progress to question the spell by which the small room was enlarged, ornamented; or by which the one parched tree, visible from its narrow window, seemed to ramify and produce forms of verdant grace and luxuriance, by a more subtle magic than was ever the work of a Beckford's wealth; she never asked why the sunlight seemed to rest peculiarly upon it, or its branches waved so deliciously beneath the heavily laden air; heavily laden, not with aromatic spices, or the perfume of flowers, but with poverty, disease, and death.

Oh Love! woman's transforming power! What wonders have been achieved—what deeds of heroism in thy name! But unrecorded at the time. It is only the neglect of indifference, the sting of unkindness, or the want of reciprocity, which uncovers the tablet on which the deeds and thoughts of love's self-sacrifice are inscribed.

A woman, really loving, is not observant of herself. Her being is absorbed in that of another. She no more pauses to inquire into, and applaud herself, to reckon up her actions, than the thoughtless, happy child stays to analyze his delight in the fragrance of a flower, or the chase of a butterfly; to count how many times he has looked up in admiring reverence to the sky, or rejoiced in the shade of the friendly trees. It is when the flower fades, the butterfly becomes a worm, the clouds darken, and the trees shew nothing but their bleak, winter branches, that the memory of the summer's joyful devotion recurs.

But Eustace had never breathed, nor thought, nor talked of love. Had he been a coxcomb, he might have suspected the real state of the case; but as it was, he was simply unconscious.

Perplexed more and more by the great social problems of a vast city, more and more immersed in deep studies, alien as it would seem from his own immediate circumstances; seeking silently, within himself and his imperfection (unknown to all on earth but his own conscience) the analogy and key to the world's wants of which he was observant. He expressed a pleased surprise, however, at his pupil's progress; and had even been successful in disposing advantageously of some of her drawings, the very

copies of his own unsold works. The beauty of his character was conspicuous here.

An artist is generally a jealous being. A lover may manifest self-abnegation, but a friend, a "mere friend," as it is so often called, seldom feels called upon to let another bear off the fruit and flowers of the tree he has planted for himself.

And Amy, too, wonderful though it may seem to boarding-school young ladies, or young ladies professedly on their preferment, was unconscious too. She was now a perfect sceptic as to the ill effects of a London atmosphere, which had told its tale upon her delicate frame so sadly on her first arrival; and mistook the light and joy within her for returning health, and the effects of congenial occupation. Alas! poor Amy! what would she have thought, if told at this time that, after all, *she* was never meant for a great artist! Would she have believed, too, that her constitution was becoming daily undermined, despite her bright eye and roseate cheek; above all, that a trial, heavier and greater than any she had yet been called upon to endure *awaited her*?

CHAPTER XIII.

The Cholera in Bermondsey — Retribution — Who Helped? —
“Grave, where is thy Victory?” — Childhood — The “Circle of
the Wise” — In Memoriam — Separation between the Living —
Really, Sir, it’s highly improprie.

THEY had been located about three years in London when the cholera, after making gradual, but unerring approaches through other countries, alighted, with all its awful details, on the Surrey side of the metropolis.

Men shrunk from the infected quarter and its suburbs, wondering at the horror of the visitation. Why and wherefore? Then, and not until then, they began to talk of the polluted Thames—the over-laden sewers—the over-crowded dwellings of the poor, their inefficient ventilation, and tainted food. Now, the common maxim begins to prevail that “prevention is better than cure,” but then, the remedies could not stay the raging evil; indeed,

in some cases, as coming too late, they served but to aggravate it.

It was summer time; but the sky was often darkened by a leaden hue, usually portentous of a fresh outbreak of this dire disease. The bells tolled; the coffins were carried along the hot streets; the atmosphere reeked with revolting and retributive suffocation in that quarter of this great city. At the other end of London, among the rich and well fed, it was imagined that the destroyer could not come; but, like the winged seeds of a well known noxious plant, the disease found its way, and suddenly struck down some who had hitherto fancied themselves safe, hedged in, from the fatal contingencies of poverty and its neighbourhood. Men squabbled as to cause, and were self-seeking even then in proposing inefficient means to stop the awful effects; but, in the meanwhile, death and destruction continued their work. Sometimes almost a whole family would be swept away; at others, the mysterious message was conveyed to one or two in a house. The one would be taken and the other left; perhaps the most beloved, or the most revered, from some dear hearth and home; and the others remained too stunned and desolate to share the terror and dismay, which the news of their misfortune had caused to spring up anew without doors, amid the heat, the dust, the heavily oppressive atmos-

phere. Some men, clergymen and doctors, holding to their work, never flinched for a single hour, nor disregarded the call of the sick, distressed, and dying. Others (but let us not condemn them) fled from the scene, left the helm of their duty to the storm. Any excuse to get away; any plea to disentangle themselves from the solemn responsibilities in which they had become involved, legitimately, by the Divine Will. Ah! this is a time to test a man's faith by practice! Then the awful desperation of Despair in some of the untaught poor in that low neighbourhood! a terror impelling men and women to seek the stimulant and oblivion of the public-house and gin-shop; their orgies returning home from whence, breaking in on the ears of the dying and mourner in some midnight chamber. Work for the Church to counteract!

But some individuals there were, neither priest nor physician, earnest, active, and useful at this time. Charles Lyle and Eustace Neville were to be found amid the most terrible scenes, carrying help and consolation where needed most. The clergyman and the doctor of the district where they dwelt were surprised at the untiring zeal of these young men; they were volunteers, but, anxious to work under authority as far as possible. Through the situation held by one, they often, however, were the first to give the signal of distress; and were com-

pelled to take the initiative until help professional could arrive either for soul or body.

Charles Lyle had long been beloved and appreciated by those he taught, and young though he was, many now brought their fears and griefs to him. His had been a very secluded path; but unknown and unobserved by the world, he had tasted in meekness, some of the richest fruits of Life's tree. He had known sorrow, and had felt want, but over these the joy of usefulness had been paramount. He was very fragile in person, and quiet of speech; so much so, that at first his scholars, all of the lower class, were not at all impressed with the one who was placed over them; but undaunted by even their rudeness and inattention, though often suffering from delicate health, he had persevered and triumphed. Now, they considered that no work was too strong for that gentle being, their instructor, and so it seemed; for, borne up by a might beyond that of flesh, he passed through scenes, at this crisis, from which many a physically brave man would have turned away, sickened and appalled. His work and faith were tried, and not found wanting.

Then came the decree. The ordeal was passed. "Earth to earth—dust to dust." But grave, where is thy victory in such a case?

Nay, the more the crowded burial-place, where they laid him, might breathe corruption, the more

transcendant the power which speaks through all the universe of incorruption. There is a triumph even to faith militant, in this very thing in its time, but a terrible revulsion shook the mourning hearts of sister and friend, when stern necessity bade them leave Charlie in that London crowded grave-yard.

He, the gracious, sympathizing, and refined, he, the beloved, for whom no care, as far as his sister's little means permitted, could be sufficiently delicate, to be left in that place! He who had so loved the trees and flowers, the sights and song of Nature, to be there! Away from kindred, without a blossom, a blade of grass, near his resting-place; no shade but that cast from the heavy, ominous-looking dwellings of the lowest class of which this scarcely open spot was the centre. And the sounds, too, which burst, ever and anon, over this bed of death, from the degraded life around! Sounds of contention, and crime, near the one who had been so peaceful, who shrunk so sensitively from the contamination of evil in every form. To the bereaved, how heart-rending the contemplation of that newly dug, narrow, shallow grave, amid the revolting signs of sin and barbarism in life, and corrupt mortality as its humiliating lesson. To Amy it was especially dreadful; she who had trodden with him, hand in hand, during that childhood which now recurred so vividly, the country churchyard with its symbols of hope and immortality! How hushed

had been their voices, how soft their step on that hallowed ground! How they fancied themselves amid a glorified band, a heavenly throng. To them it had been the sweetest nook of rest; from which all notion of fear was banished with evil!

A terrible feeling of physical dread took possession of the unhappy over-excited girl. Often, in the night, after dreaming of those early, peaceful years, and their dear companion, she would wake in an agony to find herself alone with the stern present, and amid the uncongenial scene. A sense of terror followed, terror even of death. She had slightly suffered from the same disease which had deprived her of her brother, and this may have helped so utterly to debilitate both mind and body; but in these paroxysms the excited imagination ever flew to the London grave-yard and hovered there, over one unrecorded spot.

At last, Eustace divined the source of so much additional misery; and he was very successful, because sincere, in his earnest desire to combat the fresh source of trouble.

"But *his* rest is not the less sweet," he said. "All that you have ever seen, shocking and harrowing, is merely the effect, under divers forms of evil. You know the only antidote to evil. You almost appear to limit its universality in permitting thus, a material contemplation of that

which is a social wrong, a wrong, too, likely to bring about a better state of things in its potency, to drag you down to earth. Your brother is not there. It would, dear Amy, be perhaps equally painful to fancy him beneath the green grass, or among those types of beauty in the natural world, all of which, be it remembered, spring into their transitory loveliness through corruption.

“But how pale their glory to that of the redeemed ; how poor, every emblem of earth, to the undying bliss of Heaven. I believe that, somehow, good will triumph over evil ; and order arise from chaos. You know the parable of Dives and Lazarus—what the one is stripped of his purple, and the other healed of his sores :—believe, therefore, that it may be greater honour to lie down by the side of the rejected beggar, than to share the mausoleum of the rich. Imagine a comparison made from another world, between the beggar, outcast and miserable, and clothed in heavenly radiance ; of the rich man in his worldly pomp, and bereft of his gewgaws. And then, when beholding the secret of real honour unveiled, how great a privilege it may be deemed to have been classed—either in life or death—with the poor, the suffering, the neglected ; to have helped forward any social change in their favour. Their favour ! Those for whom your brother risked his life, and seemed to lose it ; and through zeal in whose cause, he changed Mortality for Immortality.”

A year later, or thereabouts, Tennyson best expressed what especial share Eustace Neville had in the deep regret and fervent hope in³ behalf of his dead friend; for truly he had been unto him as a brother. And now, my reader, you will understand that it was "In Memoriam," that he had wandered to the graveyard the first night he appeared to you, and it is not difficult to imagine some of the reflections, which detained him there, beneath the pale moon. You understand, also, the deep grief which had withered the cheek of the young girl; how one loss after another, followed by circumstances of increasing poverty, had robbed her of all appertaining to the comforts of her former life, and every trace of the gaiety of girlhood. Their pecuniary means were indeed more contracted than ever. The expenses of sickness and its sequel, the impossibility of exertion in the hour of heavy bereavement, had brought these two friends to that stage of want—real want, of which none can suspect the horror but those who have endured it.

And on none can it be inflicted in its full force, as on such as these. When poverty and starvation come to those born amid their annals, the distressing accompaniment of shame is not theirs in the same degree, that sense more pitiable in those of refined antecedents and gentle birth, than the pangs of hunger; stronger, in some instances, than the fear of death.

And over Amy Lyle there was impending the agony and separation from the one remaining friend, her counsellor, her guide, her support—the secretly beloved one. This unshared anguish was well nigh intolerable; and its very weight, perhaps, crushed from her heart the revelation of its secret, yielding up to her a knowledge more saddening, (but not humiliating because the object of her love was worthy) than the harassing catalogue of daily misery. Amid the distraction of extreme circumstances, Eustace had received, unsolicited, and with much surprise, the offer of a secretaryship to a distant connexion of his mother, filling an official place in Australia. Pride would have rebelled against its acceptance, but precept whispered a different argument, while destitution left him no alternative.

By this means, he thought, he could contribute to the support of Amy Lyle. The salary offered was very low, but it was a certainty; his habits were those of self-denial; and in another land, a more enlarged path was more likely, he thought, to present itself than in the over-thronged Mother Country. But with whom could he leave the orphan girl, of whom circumstances had made him so peculiarly the protector? And how could he, without money or interest, incur the expense of a long voyage?

The latter difficulty was more easily overcome than the former. An opportunity arose of working his

passage out as clerk to an Emigrant ship. Of this humble offer he gratefully availed himself, and more especially as his application brought him in contact with those whose human love, and noble philanthropy, were akin to some of his silent, but deepest aspirations.

But when he looked at Amy's slight, drooping form; when he observed her patient submission to a severe discipline, and her unobtrusive endeavours to render their small home, denuded of everything but necessities, something like a reflection of the past and its household comforts, his kind heart was penetrated with a brotherly and pitying affection, so watchful and fearful, that he knew not what shelter was worthy to protect that young head. But, even if remaining in England, that he must part with her was very certain. Madam Respectability had enlightened him on this point, (on which he might not have been so clear, if left to his own unaided fancy) in the form of the matron to the Institution where Charlie had taught. One day, having occasion to call there, she asked him after the "dear young lady."

"Ill—very ill," was the reply.

"And where is she now?" asked the matron.

"With me, of course," was the reply.

"Oh; really, Sir, pray excuse me; but, indeed, that don't look at all proper," quoth the dame.

"Not proper!" exclaimed Eustace, "why I am her only friend in the wide world. She has been as a sister to me since her early childhood, and was beloved by my mother, to whom she was as a daughter until death."

"No doubt, Sir, very true, Sir," answered the woman, somewhat abashed at this astonished burst of innocence, "all quite true. But still—the world, Sir. You know the world, if she don't, poor young thing! And what would it say?"

The question was positively revolting at the moment; but, afterwards, Eustace was compelled to admit the uncongenial common-place.

"If I could but find a home and occupation for her!" he, at length, exclaimed.

"Would the young lady be very particular as to what she had to do?" asked the matron, after a moment's pause.

"Alas! no. Poverty leaves not much choice in that which is honourable," was the melancholy answer. And thus it turned out that, when the time fast approached for the departure of the emigrant; when preparations of hope and grief were being made in that ship which was to bear away the lives and fortunes of so many; when scenes of heart-rending separation from land and kindred were being enacted on her decks; and already the eyes of the outward-bound were weeping a long and last farewell

to the land of their birth, Amy was about to be committed to the care of the well-meaning, but coarse-spoken woman, who had shown interest in her, by procuring for her a subordinate, but retired situation in the same establishment as herself, where no menial duties were required.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Vigil—Let us Pray—Alone in the Attic—Dead Flowers—
London Church Clocks.

AND so the last evening had come—the vigil of the day which was to Amy one of dark despair, and to Eustace a mournful dawn, through which the glimmer of an earthly hope was just permitted to penetrate. He tried to rouse her to something like the perception of this hope; but, alas! all that he said had no reference to himself in her future. No, henceforth she must stand alone; it was all a blank; a weary, solitary way, through a wilderness. But for the wickedness of the thought, at which she inwardly shuddered, she would have wished to die—to pass away, before the past, in this, its sole remaining type, could leave her. Mechanically, however, she obeyed the expression of his slightest wish. She even complied with his desire to take

the nourishment that was so essential to her feeble frame. It was a great effort, but one of gratitude to the kindness which had procured it. Eustace accounted for her extreme depression by the fact of that physical debility which was only too apparent. He tried, but fruitlessly, to rouse her to more frequent speech, to fan an interest in subjects and things of which they were wont to speak. But in vain; she evidently made great exertion; but the spell of her grief was too strong for her unaided will to break through.

At last "Let us pray!" he said; and they knelt down, side by side, in that still hour of the night; but, ere the solemn concluding words were uttered, a blessing invoking protection for her, the small chamber echoed with sobs so convulsive, that they seemed to test the power of life or death in the poor breaking heart, from which they issued. And those tears were a great boon to the stricken girl. They saved her reason.

Fearing the result of this great excitement, and believing it to spring partly from physical causes, the late long fasting and over-exertion, Eustace called in the woman of the house to render any assistance that might be necessary in preparing Amy for the rest of which she stood so much in need. Alas! the mind diseased was beyond the help of the matronly kindness evinced by the good landlady; and the

over-strung, over-taxed mind was even harassed still more by the ordinary suggestions, the common-place care, which prescribed sleep as the first essential. Sleep! how impossible for that excited heart, those beating pulses! "Sleep! and to-morrow you will be better." It was such an easy thing to recommend; but that word "to-morrow!" how little the self-constituted nurse, although aware of its being an era in the life of her seemingly compliant patient, knew the thrilling agony of that word as it struck on her ear. Then again the horror of that thought, in its wickedness, which would have cried:

"To die,—to sleep,—

No more; and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! perchance to dream."

And dreams, though poor Amy had not 'shuffled off this mortal coil,' had not helped hitherto, as I have told you, to shorten the long life of painful fact!

The glimpses thus afforded of what had been, rendered the contrast of the waking moment terrific. Latterly, certainly, this horror had been mitigated by the conversation of Eustace; her mind had given promise of a renewed tone; but now the support

was about to be withdrawn. Unhappy, friendless, homeless, Amy!

But no; not friendless. From the depths of despair an unknown and unexpected energy may sometimes arise.

It was so with her during that dark night of intense affliction. Her attendant, the landlady, had long ago left her, and told Eustace, that "the young lady was calm and composed," the whole of the little household was long ago wrapt in slumber, when Amy rose from the couch on which, in obedience, she had lain down. At first, she could scarcely stand, and was astonished at the utter prostration of strength which rendered her sick, fainting, and giddy. A few tears helped to restore the faculties almost benumbed by the recent and unwonted manifestations of excitement in one usually so extremely gentle and quiet in thought and manner: then, tottering towards the narrow window, she looked out on the street, never so unfrequented as at that hour. The heavy, ill-looking houses frowned on her from the opposite side; the one tree, she had watched so lovingly during the past months, looked stark, faded, and unsightly. The flower-pots on the sill, the gifts of her brother and friend, were filled with withered leaves. Those flowers that had been! Bought they were one morning in early spring when fragrance and sunshine had penetrated

into this dense atmosphere, and she had sprung up, delighted, at the call of vendors of the cheap plants, reminding her that the winter had gone, and the harbingers of a more genial season returned to the old spots far away; and here too; yes, even here, in the forms and names with which she had been so familiar from childhood. Most simple flowers, despicable to the possessor of conservatory and hot-house, fit only to be rooted up, and cast away as unfit to bloom alongside of the choice exotic; but flowers most endeared by earliest sympathy, and, in Amy's case, by devout memory—for they were blooming on the quiet graves of the beloved.

But now, when she touches them, her fingers close on the dry stalks and crumbling leaves. "And it is well," she says, "for to-morrow I must part with even these; and for those that gave them! One dead, and another gone!"

.But she places the other hand over the withered remains, as if to keep them from escaping too soon in their perishing lightness; then raises them to her lips. "The day must be advancing," she murmurs, "the day of parting, and utter loneliness." Gently she opens the little window—how gloomy, the unwonted stillness, how almost portentous! A dark mantle shrouding poverty, suffering, perhaps crime in the region around.

Not a star to be seen overhead, not a glimmer of

moonlight ; the barren tree and other desolate objects only visible by the fitful glare of the gas-lamp beneath. Nothing on earth seems to send back a ray of kindly sympathy to the stricken watcher, as she stands with her pale face, her long fair hair drawn back from the brow contracted by suffering, the outline of the young face sharpened by recent want, and the large eyes suffused with tears. The hand slightly trembles, which, still holding the dead flowers, is pressed against her white night-dress as if to still the heart which begins again to throb so wildly, so painfully ; when, suddenly, and distinctly, the deep chimes of the great City Cathedral toll out the hour ; and, ere their reverberation has ceased over the roofs of the squalid habitations around, another church announces the advent of a new day ; then the echo is caught up by others in every ecclesiastical tone of the universal language, until the air is filled with notes of hope or warning, sent forth by the multitude of steeples which have been likened to conductors,—averting the lightning wrath of Heaven from the myriad human habitations, with all their dread secrets, beneath.

What is there so consolatory in such a sound ? Does it draw the weary heart back to its first principles, the only means of real refreshment ? Does it breathe of the littleness of human vexations, pointing onwards when Time shall be merged in eternity ?

Does it bespeak more real unity than might be suspected amid the dust of controversy, the heat of polemic discussion, the wear and tear of London life, and its great business of money-getting?

I think that any, or all of these recollections, and many another moral too, are suggested by the church clocks of a vast metropolis striking at the same moment; but to Amy Lyle they recall a solemn lesson, and a better hope. She kneels. And in all such cases may

“ Angels in their songs rejoice,
And say—‘ Behold *she* prays.’ ”

CHAPTER XV.

Lonely Breakfast—Old Sketches—A Stranger—An Old Friend—
Transpontine Sympathies—The Protégée—The Bermondsey
Doctor.

THE next morning Amy entered the little sitting-room, calm and composed, but very pale—Eustace was not there to greet her as usual. Was it possible that he had already gone? She shuddered as the contingency flashed across her mind, although a sense of womanly relief ensued with the quick remembrance of having kept her secret, the secret which had only of late been revealed to herself, but from the evidence of which she would have shrunk as a criminal from the confession of the crime which would lead him to the scaffold. It was strange how little she thought of the ways and means of the dreary, lonely future stretching out before her. She did not know how the little sum of money for which Eustace had sacrificed the picture last night was

already deposited in the hands of the matron of the Institution in which she was engaged for her use ; (to effect this arrangement, without exciting her suspicion of his intention was the cause of Mr. Neville's absence at this early hour of the morning). Neither was she aware of his visit to the grave-yard last night ; nor of his having denied himself the very necessaries of life that the earth should be decently kept, as far as possible, which covered the remains of his friend—her brother.

It was well for the poor girl that she was saved the consciousness of these, and many other acts of gentle benevolence in her behalf, by the delicacy of that noble, manly heart so prescient as to her wants and feelings. It was an injustice to suppose, even for a moment, that the companion of years and affliction could depart without one word, or line, or farewell ; but it was the injustice of a love which had grown from childhood, and had been nourished by sorrow.

We are, generally, much more just and liberal towards an indifferent person. It is so easy to judge rationally, to accept the *probable*, rather than the feverish *possible*, where the heart does not interfere with the head. And, indeed, the painful possible was not long permitted to remain in this case, for the landlady soon came bustling in with unusual alacrity and a small tray, exclaiming :

“Dear me, Miss, I really did not expect to see

you up so early to-day, after your illness last night. Mr. Neville told me not to disturb you, and I'm sure that sleep would have been the best thing for you."

"Have you seen him to-day?" faltered Amy, not heeding the repetition of the good woman's unfailing specific for every ache and woe.

"Seen him—Mr. Neville do you mean, Miss? Oh, yes! and he told me, by the bye, to tell you if you awoke before his return, that he had gone a little way on business, and that you were not to wait breakfast."

And turning round to the table, with a face on which a sudden sense of relief was depicted, Amy recognized that some unusual care had provided a morning meal; but when she smiled faintly, and lifted her eyes swimming with acknowledgment, to the countenance of the honest, buxom dame before her, that individual cried out,

"Oh! pray don't thank *me*, Miss," then, after a sotto voce parenthesis, which sounded very much like ("I've got nothing to do with it,") she added, "but only eat, that is what you ought to do to get well, or to let us know your gratitude."

"I will try," answered poor Amy; but the patient found the prescription too difficult to follow.

At a later hour of the day, Eustace and Amy were looking over some old portfolios of drawings. He

had returned home, bringing with him a great relieve for his young companion, in the news that the ship in which he was about to sail, would not embark for some days. This brief postponement brought back something like elasticity to the step of the orphan girl, and light to her eye: and now they sat together, recalling many a scene of the beloved and never to be forgotten Past, in which those they both mourned, had an endearing memory.

"And you shall keep all these sketches, dear Amy," at length said Eustace; for hitherto, they had spoken but little, "they will be a resource in many a wistful hour, bringing the past with its personages and *principles* vividly into your new home, and helping to make you feel the present, though oftentimes trying and tedious, but a link to that Future when we shall, I trust, all meet to part no more."

"No, not keep them all, Eustace," answered the young girl, trying to suppress the painful sense of rising emotion. "Not all: for will they not also soothe and help to encourage you when far away?"

"Yes, you must keep them all," he replied; "and you will shew them to me years hence, when my dreams of life have been realized, or disappointed. In the meanwhile, the subjects of these sketches will never pass from my heart, although I know not where their memory will be carried; isolated my path will be, and stormy the clouds overhead; I know

not whither my wanderings may lead me; so with you, Amy, must remain the relics of a quiet home; they will be safe in your keeping, and invaluable in your sight."

But he did not add that he thought her more worthy the deposit—she who had ever been so grateful and contented in the peaceful nook afar off, while he had been tossed by doubt and dissatisfaction under circumstances which now, by the contrast, seemed to reproach him with their very blessedness.

Seeing the shadow on his brow, the girl struggled with her own feelings in the hope of soothing him. She thought it rested there from the contemplation of an uncertain and alienated future; but before the words which intense but mistaken sympathy could suggest, were uttered, the door of the little apartment was opened, and a strange lady stood on its threshold, contemplating its inhabitants.

"And have you quite forgotten me?" she exclaimed, advancing towards Eustace, who had risen, with a bow devoid of recognition. "Do you never think of the life you saved nearly five years ago?" And she extended her hand to him; while, with a smile she looked at Amy Lyle, as if to assure her of some genial share in the intention which had brought her to their home.

"Miss Lester! Is it possible?" ejaculated Eustace, taking her hand.

"More possible," she answered, laughing, "than a generous mind's remembrance of a favour it has conferred;" and she looked up in his face with a glance earnest and sudden, but with which the low musical laugh was perfectly in harmony. Those upraised eyes recalled her perfectly and instantaneously to his mind; their peculiar expression had never been forgotten by the artist; and he answered:

"I should have known you anywhere!"

"*But* here," she rejoined with a smile; then, addressing herself to Amy, who had been silently contemplating her with an astonishment not unmingled with awe, and drawing her, with kindness, towards her. "And yet," she added, "I seem to know you both so well, and am quite familiar with this room, its histories, and occupations. These sketches," she continued, taking up one, and with fond admiration regarding it, "recall, at a glance, my childhood as well as your's; will you permit a mutual memory to be the bond of a future friendship?"

Her words added to the surprise of those she came to visit; but the fascination she seemed born to exercise, increased with every moment. The voice and manner, the one with its many musical modulations, and the other with a changeful grace, earnest and animated in turn, but always perfectly free from restlessness, prevented, or suspended, an accurate observation of her person; excepting, that she was

rather above the middle height, with very dark hair, and most simply dressed in a straw bonnet, and a robe of a hue more befitting a Quaker, than the outline which, beneath the long sombre garment, had an elegance most perceptible, and peculiarly its own.

As to Eustace and Amy, they fancied they had never seen a person half so beautiful; but you must recollect that they were both refined in artistic observation, so that a mere man or woman of the world might not have been so enthusiastic in a ready appreciation.

"But I forget," she continued, not allowing time for reply, "that you may not have heard of me in the interval which has revealed to me many of your beneficent acts in that long time ago. Truly," turning with indescribable grace towards Amy, and taking her hand, "the goodly perfume of a past influence has not exhaled from the spot so remote from hence, yet teeming with human life and its eternal sympathies. Those who are gone yet live and speak in the hearts of the poor people there. Ah! why did I not know you all in those days! but I am wrong; a deep sorrow, a heart's canker-worm, precluded all intercourse between my uncle and any section of the world which had wronged him."

She paused; her eyes were cast down, and her breast heaved, so that her companions feared to

intrude on the moment of some evidently poignant remembrance. But the agitation was transitory, although the deep emotion which had caused her to betray it, might be detected in the low solemn cadence of her voice, and perceived in her pale cheek, as she quietly proceeded.

"He, too, is now, I trust, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest! I am the steward of his worldly goods. But let me be brief; although," she continued, with her sweet smile, and a faint blush, "my apology for this intrusion scarcely permits that conciseness which, though possibly the soul of wit, is not always the spirit of politeness. Well, then; I much desired to see and know those of whom I had heard so much, and always cherished the hope of some day finding. But, in the meanwhile, circumstances led me to the continent, and detained me there more than a year. When I returned, all traces of you were lost. Latterly, my attention has been called to this neighbourhood by its dire calamity. Since my residence in London, I have made acquaintance with the medical man who has attended so largely and successfully to the sick and suffering in your vicinity; and during a recent conversation, your names were mentioned—I will not add with what eulogium. And now, will you forgive the liberty I have taken in thus using my information, and

the facility with which your good landlady favoured my entrance?"

The unaffected delicacy which prompted the fear, so hesitatingly, yet archly expressed (the delicacy which is too seldom felt by the rich towards the poor) increased her power over her grateful hearers. Amy, for once, was the first to speak. Turning her wan face, a little flushed with excitement, towards the guest, and looking at her, as she sat beside her, with tears trembling in the blue eyes beneath which, sorrow and privation had drawn such large dark circles, she said: "Ah! Madam, how can we thank you for this proof of your kindness? to leave your home for this poor neighbourhood around which, some say, infection still lingers—and—"

"Do not magnify my Transportine journey and its danger," answered the lady, laughing, "as I am accustomed to both more than you think; and prithee give me not my brevet as 'Madam.' Have I not told you, how well I know you? then let me be, henceforth, 'Beatrice.' And now, Mr. Neville," she continued, advancing towards the window, where he was standing, "I am going to ask you to confer a great favour on the life you saved."

"Anything in the world," he began in an earnest tone, "anything—"

"Nay, nay;" she interposed, "be not so free of

promise until you know the individual you have to deal with. But, in a few words;—I know of your speedy departure for a New World, and I know enough of this—

‘ Happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea.’

As Shakspeare calls poor old England, to sympathize with your intention on the one hand, and to appreciate the value of a genial companion on the other. Will you, therefore, leave Amy Lyle with me?”

Again the upturned radiant look. He was about to answer, to pour forth something of his faith in the goodness of which it was the bright symbol, when Amy ran forward, with hands outstretched, and in broken voice, exclaiming :

“Is it possible?—oh! I am not worthy—I am but a poor, ignorant—”

“Dear Amy,” calmly said Beatrice Lester, but with a quivering lip, and placing her hand on the fair head of the child-like, but emaciated creature before her, “I know what you are. Believe, therefore, that you can contribute to my happiness;—only trust me.”

“Trust you!” now exclaimed, Eustace. “Yes!” Then, looking at them both, he said, in a deep earnest voice :

"If you are willing to go with her, Amy, there is none to whose care I would sooner entrust you than to this lady's. Although an hour since, I should have thought it impossible that a stranger would have claimed and gained this perfect confidence: for yourself, Madam," he added, "you are right in believing that the dear little girl by your side can help to make any home happy, and sweeten life, under any circumstances. My mother found it so; and for myself—no fondly cherished sister—" but the manly voice faltered, and Amy sobbed audibly.

"Shall be committed," interpolated Beatrice, evidently smothering her own emotion under an appearance of gaiety, "to the guardianship, of one so little known as I am at this moment; but challenging free inquiry," she smilingly added, "I bid you both appear before me to-morrow; this card will enable you to find out where; although my carriage shall convey you at mid-day to what Amy will, I trust, consider her future home."

And kissing the still weeping girl on the brow—she departed. Gone so suddenly and unexpectedly, that they might both have thought the whole a dream, but for the card Eustace still held in the hand which trembled somewhat unusually.

In the evening, the medical man of whom Beatrice Lester had spoken called on Mr. Neville. Dr. M——

had attended Charles Lyle in his last illness, and knew more, than was supposed, of the suffering and privation undergone in that lowly lodging. An eccentric man this very worthy doctor; hiding deep feeling and sympathy for the misery abounding around him under an appearance of careless vivacity, which, however, somehow or other, never caused a pang, nor met with misapprehension even among the most ignorant and easy to take offence. He now popped his head into the room where Eustace and Amy were sitting, his approach having been heralded by his cheery voice on the stairs.

"So here you both are, I find, moping as usual, in spite of all I've said about air and exercise—"

"But it is our last evening together, Doctor," remonstrated Eustace with a smile.

"Aye, aye; and you find it easier to talk in this little room, than when jostled along the streets—but you look much too pale, Miss Lyle, to be quite beautiful in the eyes of any but some of those spasmodic poets who would reduce the colour and form of woman to their own squeamish fancies."

Amy laughed, and beginning to say:

"Have you read—" was interrupted by,

"Never mind what I've read—more, at all events, than I care to remember; but let us talk of action. When are you off to Australia, Neville?"

On hearing of the brief postponement; he continued:

"Then if it had not been for this, you would have been off, Sir, without shaking hands with me. Well, well; no explanations and apologies—I hate them—but I certainly should have been sorry to have missed bidding good luck to one who has been a fellow worker of mine. Ah! my boy; there's no fraternisation like that of sickness and grief. But my little friend here—the matron up yonder tells me that she's to be left under the shadow of her goodly dimensions—is it so?"

And of course the query brought about the explanation of Miss Lester's visit and proposal, with many an interjectional note of their own gratitude and astonishment. As to thanking Dr. M—— for his share in bringing about the change in Amy's destiny, that would have been too dangerous an experiment; for the good man, a man of uncertain age and remembered by some for many a year (though supposed still almost young by others), was never known to stand the fire of flattery, or the incense of praise. After listening to the statement now made, he merely rubbed his hands, rose from his chair, and sitting down again, said:

"Just like her. She's a glorious woman."

But when Amy reiterated her surprise that the lady of "the Castle," of whom she had heard from a child, should be in London, no longer a myth, but a palpable, living, breathing fact—he answered:

"I really don't know all her reasons for coming to Babel ; but I do know that, young as she is, she has done something in harmonizing the discord of its language ; and that, refined as she is, she never forgets the vernacular. Why, do you know, Sir," turning to Eustace, " when I first met that woman, it was in a scene that cries shame on the landlord, and reduces statesmanship to despair ; the next time, in an El Dorado of London life, where flattery and flunkeyism abound, and where the horrible facts with which Beatrice Lester must have been familiar would have been left 'for the imagination,' to say nothing of what little wit there was for 'the memory.' But don't suppose, either of you, that she was sitting in a corner of what novelists would call 'that gilded saloon,' as an oddity, or that she was paraded as a she-lion, or that she talked the balderdash of woman's philanthropy, or that, in any respect, she looked, moved, sat or spoke like a 'strong-minded woman.' Oh, no ! When I tell you that Beatrice Lester is very rich, you will understand that she is courted ; when I add that she is clever, you would suppose that she is feared ; and when you know that she is handsome, you will guess that she is admired by the men, and pooh-poohed by the other sex. But, with the exception of the first clause you would be wrong. Courté everywhere she is ; but she inspires no fear and no jealousy—not even, I believe, in that article

of feminine desire, an elegant attire. Smile if you will, Miss Amy, but believe me, dress is to women what politics are to men. Nay, it might be easier to crush a faction than to crumple the crinoline. But don't be offended in behalf of your kind; for, as far as I'm concerned, I confess to no admiration for a dowdy."

"But does Miss Lester live alone?" asked Eustace.

"Dear me, no," answered the doctor. "Miss Lester is far too much observed to despise conventionality. She is guarded, therefore, with all propriety, by a duenna; and chaperoned by a duchess; Madame Respectability herself could require no more."

"And her uncle—"

"Has been dead nearly four years; soon after your flight from his locality. Strange tales are told about him even in London, but the mystery adds to the interest his niece inspires. The queerest thing, however, is—that he, a woman hater, should have left his money to her; and particularly if there be any truth in the statement that for some time another heir was expected to appear. But now, good night—good night! Miss Amy, I shall, perhaps, see you sometimes—and for you, Neville, my brave young friend! Heaven bless and prosper you." And with a husky voice, a wring of the

hand, and a malediction against the door which creaked as it opened—he was off.

In a moment, he put his head in again with, “It’s only to tell you both that I’ll manage the matron if there’s any difficulty in finding a substitute for Amy Lyle.”

And before they could stop him, he had again vanished.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Boudoir—The Misanthrope's Dog—The Madre—Dazzled by Introspection — "Where do you put your Brown Tree?" — "The Fate of Genius" — Excelsior — The Sybil — Merit *versus* Favour—A Good Time Coming—Woman's Mission.

THE house to which Eustace and Amy found themselves conducted on the following day, according to appointment, was in one of the most aristocratic but quiet streets in London. The seclusion, and silence unbroken, but by the soft rumble of well hung carriage wheels, seemed favourable even to the growth of some fresh and beautiful plants in the balconies; behind which the graceful drapery in the upper windows led the fancy of the passer by into apartments softened down to that luxurious subdued light which, somehow, the good wealthy folks of the other civilized parts

of the metropolis do not always understand. Perhaps they imagine, wrongfully, that their comely and expensive furniture and carpets cannot be properly demonstrated without the glare which would effectually have prevented an artist painting one of the pictures on their walls.

The residence of Beatrice Lester was not very large, but the promise of the chaste repose intimated by the external arrangements was fully realized the moment your foot crossed the threshold. No parade was there of a liveried crew; but a respectable, quiet man, without a shade of the hypocrisy of his class on his countenance, led the visitor on respectfully, (whatever the cut of coat or cloak,) through a spacious hall, (which, unlike many London vestibules, was warm and peculiarly fragrant) into such rooms as might be denoted by the business or pleasure-seeking of the guest. For the visitors to his young mistress, were certainly not all of one class.

In the present case, when Amy and Eustace arrived, they felt themselves immediately honoured and expected; and were at once marshalled to a small, inner, morning room, the simple, but elegant, and *habitable* arrangements of which were rather in contrast to the fairy-land view just permitted by a half-closed folding-door of a suite of apartments beyond.

In the pleasant nook to which they had been ushered were a desk and easel, both having the appearance of constant use ; a large supply of the newest publications on a variety of subjects—artistic, poetic, political, and philosophical ; a vase of fresh flowers ; a heap of letters, of every form and dimension, from the polished, perfumed missive, to the large, clumsy appeal of business or charity ; and some manuscript music on a stand, by an uncovered harp, near the shaded and richly curtained window ; while the chilliness of the late autumn morning was dispersed by the cheerful fire, principally composed of wood emitting a pleasant odour, burning on the hearth, before which was stretched a large dog, instantly recognised by Mr. Neville as that he had seen years before at the feet of Sir Richard Lester.

The creature, however, did not now resent his approach ; slightly raising the head, over which, time told its tale to any one versed in the signs of canine maturity, and, giving a glance of speculative wonder towards the strangers, he re-composed himself to sleep, with an appearance of trust and satisfaction. But Eustace and Amy were not left long alone with the mute, but expressive objects of their observation. In a few minutes, an elderly lady entered ; and by one glance she was identified. She who had speeded

the departure of the young artist from the Castle in a bygone day, now advanced graciously towards him, with a gesture of cordial welcome.

"And this is the Amy Lyle," she said, extending a hand to her also, "of whom I have heard so much. Come hither, dear child, and let me assure you of the affectionate interest in your welfare, awaiting you beneath this roof." And she drew the somewhat abashed and trembling girl towards her, and placing her on the same sofa, while motioning Eustace to a chair near, she removed her bonnet, and smoothing the long fair hair with the well-remembered white hand, on which still glittered its one superb ring, her only ornament, she gazed into the wan, young face with an expression of commiseration. No word, however, followed this momentary, but searching scrutiny; but, stooping down, she imprinted a kiss on the brow so pale with suffering.

In another minute, a light step was heard approaching; and, gliding through the half-closed doorway, Beatrice Lester stood before them. Advancing towards Amy.

"I am so sorry," she said, in the most simple natural way in the world, "not to have been here to bid you instant welcome; but I hope the journey has not too much fatigued you, in your present state of health." And she, too, saluted her, but on both cheeks; then, playfully re-seating her,

she turned to Eustace, and giving him her hand, said, laughingly,

"Although I had to re-introduce myself to Mr. Neville yesterday, I do not think his memory can need a challenge in behalf of Mrs. Seymour—my oldest and most valued friend;" and leading him towards the lady, she withdrew her own light touch, and placed, with the gesture of a petted child, the white but withered palm of age in its stead.

"There," she said, laughing, "that is what I have long wanted to see. A shake of the hand between my life's preserver, and the one who taught me what to do with it."

This introductory passage is nothing to record; but, somehow, it was more touching than the most flowery oration.

The simplicity of deep feeling is always eloquent. Amy Lyle, the observer of this little scene, felt unbidden tears in her eyes; and Mrs. Seymour did, indeed, seem to enter with Eustace into some mute but inviolable bond of sympathy. All the formality of a new acquaintance, and that, too, between people moving in a different social circle, was at once broken through, as evidenced by the first words of the lady. After looking, with her keen but gentle eyes, in the countenance of the young man before her, she said,

"The suffering you have passed is for your great

good ; perhaps not only for your's but the weal of others also—a subject, if I mistake not, in which you are sincerely interested.”

“ May your words prove true,” answered he, without the slightest shade of embarrassment, although his voice was mournful ; “ but, in the meanwhile, I feel unworthy—even blinded by the ordeal, if ordeal it be, and—”

“ Miserably perplexed by the thousand discrepancies around you ;” interposed Beatrice, perceiving that his lip quivered and a more pallid hue overspread his countenance ; “ but wait,” she continued, “ until you are out of the dense atmosphere of this old country, to get a true view of the blue sky above ; you do not fear, Madre, *then*, for the restoration of a clear vision, do you ?”

Mrs. Seymour turned towards Beatrice, answering to the name of Madre, or Mother ; for it was as Amy began to suspect ; she had performed the hallowed part of one to the interesting being by her side.

“ *I* do not think the vision the least impaired,” answered Mrs. Seymour, smiling ; “ it is dazzled, perhaps, for a time ; and that only by too much *introspection*.”

Eustace started. Yes. It was true ; the intensity of the inward probing had not been altogether good for moral health.

"But still," answered Beatrice, "you will agree, Madre, that the antidote for what may be but a passing malady is more easily found, in this case, at the Antipodes than around us here?"

"But even if so, my young friend," replied Mrs. Seymour, addressing herself to Eustace, "we will hope that the effect of the remedy, will some day, be manifested, where the demonstration of *individuality* is so much needed. At this moment, I do think you are right in your intention. Old world conventionalism might be too strong for even your nature, or the genius of your art."

"And yet in the latter," added Beatrice, "permit me to say, Mr. Neville, that we are certain you have already had strength to break through some of the trammels. Your pictures are not unknown to us."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Eustace, "that any poor daub of mine has ever been deemed worthy your notice?"

"Oh! yes," answered Beatrice, with a smile and blush, for she feared to offend by flattery, yet yearned to give comfort by telling the real truth, "and that, too, a long time since, though the artist's name was unknown. Afterwards we ascertained it; but not before the daily contemplation of the work had made us fancy ourselves intimately acquainted with him."

"You must know," explained Mrs. Seymour, "that Beatrice Lester is a diligent searcher after modern paintings."

"But not of those," quickly responded the young lady, "which recall the ludicrous conventional inquiry—'where do you put your brown tree?' I was reading the quotation a few days since, and was so much struck by what followed, that, for a wonder, I can remember it—" and turning with sudden earnestness towards Eustace Neville, she repeated, with peculiar emphasis, "'Art so followed is the most servile indolence in which life can be wasted. There are then two dangerous extremes to be shunned, forgetfulness of the Scripture, and scorn of the divine; slavery on the one hand, and free-thinking on the other. The mean is nearly as difficult to determine or keep in art as in religion, but the great danger is on the side of superstition. He who walks humbly with Nature will seldom be in danger of losing sight of Art. He will commonly find in all that is truly great of man's works something of their original, for which he will regard them with gratitude, and sometimes follow them with respect; while he who takes Art for his authority may entirely lose sight of all that it interprets, and sink at once into the sin of the idolater, and the degradation of a slave.'"

The artist guest was becoming, momentarily, more

deeply interested ; he remembered the quotation, as shewn by his reply—

“True—painfully true ; because you know what follows—the hard fact that such pictures as are not *manufactured*, do not command the sympathy of the present day ; by the public taste is the painter often ‘earthed and shackled,’ because he is in need of life’s necessities ; he may sell that which is merely ‘clever and petite,’ but—‘the real picture, the full developement of the artist’s mind is left on his hands.’ Of course, I do not here allude to any poor work of my own ; with nothing that I have ever painted am I satisfied ; but the justice of the remark has been forced upon me by what I have seen ; by the painful observation of the last three years.”

“Before which date,” answered Beatrice, “the picture of which I spoke had left your easel—which makes me still more confident that it is wiser for you to seek the Truth of Nature in other climes, than to have enrolled yourself at the Academy.” She then turned towards Amy and continued, with a tremulous smile on her lip, and in an earnest voice :

“I daresay you think it a hard decree, this parting from your brother-friend, Amy Lyle ; but believe me it would be wise, even if not suggested by any necessity. Come, both of you, with me ;” she added, taking Amy by the hand, “come, and I will shew you *Why*.”

The three left the room together ; and passing through part of the reception suite of which their late retreat had commanded a partial view, but not pausing to examine, or admire, any of the very graceful and luxurious arrangements abounding there, they entered a small octagonal apartment beyond, in which were some exquisite gems of high art ; especially sculpture.

Silently, Beatrice led the way to a pedestal in a distant compartment ; and still holding Amy with one hand, but with her eyes raised to the face of Eustace, she pointed to the figure standing upon it. Though not yet polished, in a state scarcely to be called finished, the sudden contemplation sent a thrill through the beholders. It was the figure of a youth, on whose limbs and face might be traced an anguish, but an anguish superseded by some high ecstatic Hope,—revealed in the up-turned glance, and illuminating the exquisitely refined, but manly features.

Truth and Intellect, an Intellect of Faith, were legible on the brow ; indeed Faith seemed to support Reason ; triumphing over the intense pain. This agony was caused by the sting of a serpent ; which, entwining round the hands of the youth, held them pinioned, powerless, helpless, behind him ; and, while inflicting a mortal wound, its deadly coil entered even into a wreath of laurel, cast on the ground at the side.

"And now I will read you the inscription;" said Beatrice, in a low voice, "The Fate of Genius."

Eustace still contemplated the face; its upward glance seemed to draw him, too, above the level of an earthly reward. He did not appear to take so much heed of the pain, as of the radiant Hope—its conqueror. And he said, in almost a whisper,

"Ah, yes! Excelsior."

But with Amy it was different. She positively trembled beneath the evidence of the acute suffering and its cause; for immediately, she fancied this fate near the gifted and beloved one, over whom she must now cease to watch.

"But oh!" she cried "this is surely not the inevitable, and universal destiny!" and she clung to the arm of Beatrice as if she fancied her powerful enough to avert.

"More universal than is believed perhaps," answered Miss Lester, "in this corner of malicious competition, although most avoidable by flying while the wings are unclipped, and their plumage smooth and untarnished. But I think it dubious," she continued, speaking very earnestly, and addressing herself to Eustace, as they moved away from the sculpture-room "whether you remain long in Australia, because the air there will not be charged with sufficient electricity for those same wings to carry you: perhaps," she went on to say, while

her fine face brightened, and her slight form dilated with enthusiasm, so that she seemed taller than she really was, "perhaps they will bear you to other regions, there to behold nature under forms, and invested with hues, of which we, in this cold clime, can scarcely form an idea. You, who already,—almost unassisted in the technicalities of your art,—have been truthful to nature, and shewn her beautiful, even in comparatively mean and limited forms, may, under a tropical sky, have opportunity granted for demonstrating her marvellous glory, such as few have found or had courage to avail themselves of, if presented. Ah yes; to you I say, 'doubt not, O poet! but persist.' The truth is in you. Only believe that it 'is in you, and must go forth of you.' It is possible, indeed, that the same truth may develop itself under some other form; only be faithful to its promptings; and some day, Amy, you will proudly rejoice in its proof."

Her manner, more than her words, completely raised Eustace Neville from the deep depression he had previously felt. Already, he seemed to tread on firmer ground; the horizon became illumined. And how lovely this strange woman, scarcely past girlhood, looked, as standing between the friends of childhood, she appeared a bright sybil to one, and the protector of the other. It was quite true what the worthy doctor had said of her last night.

There was nothing unfeminine in her enthusiasm; as little so, indeed, as in the small classical head, with its coronet of shining hair, or the slight, graceful figure with its loose, flowing, morning robe of white. In fact, her manner and language, even in their highest, but evidently always unconscious, flights, were generally rounded off (for I do not know a more fit term) by some glimpse of a child-heart—as in the case of her appeal to Amy at this moment. “And will you not be proud of the proof?” Amy started—did this lady already divine her secret? But it was Eustace who answered, and that in simple wonder.

“You are very young,” said he, “for such aspirations, and still more so, to comprehend much suffering. It is experience, generally, that points the way, and antagonism which spurs on an attempt to reach the goal.”

At this moment, Mrs. Seymour approached the group.

“Come hither, dear mother,” cried Beatrice, “and help me to assure our friends that youth may be old in the contemplation of suffering and its causes—and that outward prosperity may veil an inner life in which there may be the conscious humiliation of poverty.”

“But I cannot produce a better proof,” answered Mrs. Seymour, “than the enterprise suggested by

the contemplation and the consciousness—*your* enterprise—to dig deeper than the surface.”

“Miss Lester inspires life with a fresh hope,” said Eustace.

“A hope in yourself?” smilingly asked the elder lady.

“Yes,” answered Beatrice, saving his modesty the reply, “because it is the entireness of an earnest nature that is wanted; aye, so much wanted,” and again she spoke especially to Amy, “that we must not bid him withhold its refreshing influence from our native land, but merely to test it first elsewhere,—and this only to spare the agonizing doubt and disappointment beneath which the Mother Country so often crushes the sons she wants to save her. How can the man who would be true to his creed get a footing here?” Then, appealing to her two other companions. “Abjuring patronage and its abuses, refusing to be tied to a stool by a yard of red tape, spurning, as in this case, the mere conventionality of a liberal profession, a poor man may be free, an honest one, frank; a politician sincere; and a genius unfettered; but they will perish in their independence unless backed up by the power of social ‘position,’ so cringed to in this, the enlightened 19th century.”

“You see my child is a little tinged with radicalism,” said Mrs. Seymour.

“But a radicalism, which fain would be conservative,” remonstrated Beatrice, “believing that the

tree cannot flourish when separated from the roots of its first principles. If France, before her great revolution, had inquired more into this conservatism, you know, Madre, that you, yourself, have taught me that she might have been spared the pruning knife."

"But still," suggested Eustace, "I think, despite the confusion of right and wrong,—the martyrdom and disappointment,—there is an evident progress to a better state of things. I do believe, that notwithstanding constant interruptions, peace and religion, freedom and order, are gaining upon us; a more perfect equality must be brought about by a more perfect instruction; but, in the writings of the present day, in our institutions, in the increasing means of diffusing knowledge, and in the more available appliances of every day life, there is a perceptible and growing sympathy for the mass of our population, and a more evident veneration for humanity and its destiny. Indeed, when witnessing so much of misery and degradation at the other end of London, I have been supported by a notion, which has almost grown into a belief, that we are living in a palpable state of transition to the time when the greater part of this wretchedness will be wiped away by an increase of those principles, or rather the practical working of them, which alone can be fundamental in any matter of social reform. 'The people's friend—where is he?' Where, but as one of our authors proclaims, but in Jesus of Nazareth?"

Moving on, from time to time, they had re-entered the more secluded morning-room, evidently the most used by its mistress. Taking up a book from the table near which she was seated, she said :

“ Here is the book which you quote. With what pleasure have I found the evidence of your social hope in its pages ! And warmly, too, do I share your faith. But, in the meanwhile, looking for the morning, watching the dawn of a new day, we are involved in much remaining darkness, and often stumble in the way. Men cannot find their proper work ; and to this cause, has been attributed the lamentable increase of madness around us. Anything but the shout of joy and gladness in some hearts just now ! ”

“ And, therefore,” interposed Mrs. Seymour, “ I think, that truth and earnestness do well to hoard their strength for the time and place which will, in due course, be specified for them ; far better than for a man to sit by the wayside with hands folded from very impotence to find the work, or to labour at that which will only spend and fritter his energy, or bring it back, perhaps, with a crushing force on his own heart.”

“ It is clear, therefore, Mr. Neville,” said Beatrice with a sweet but mournful smile, “ that you are right to emigrate at the present moment.”

“ And to carry with me,” he answered earnestly, “ even to the furthest corner of the earth, the memory

of this day. May its refreshing inspiration lead to practical good! In gratitude, let me tell you," and he looked on Beatrice Lester, with a look which a pilgrim might cast on a shrine, "that I feel happier, stronger, better, than for many a long day—that the vigil of my departure has strung my heart with a new hope, and brought back an energy I had imagined dead."

And in such conversation, the day passed. It was renewed on more than one occasion before the postponed departure of Eustace; but was with difficulty sustained when the period of his last visit really arrived.

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As the shades of evening deepened—that last evening—the dejection which had long held Amy absolutely silent, was manifest, under different forms in each of the little party. Beatrice addressed herself most particularly to Amy, but in such wise as to save the necessity of any reply. In a low tone she talked of distant lands; but proving how, by the power of steam, and science, whose discoveries are more and more stupendous, their wonders are brought close to our very doors. How, in fact, locomotion and electricity vanquish the consideration of space and time, so that the anguish of separation need no longer be intolerable. How kind, and hopeful, how intuitive she was, in her graciousness towards that poor girl! Mrs. Sey-

mour talked apart with Eustace ; and her words, too, were intensely consolatory ; but at length the moment of departure could no longer be deferred.

Mr. Neville advanced towards Beatrice. He held her hand in his, and gazed on her noble face as it was turned towards him with that peculiarly radiant expression which had struck him so forcibly, which had entered, as it were, into his own very soul years before. What was it that made Beatrice Lester so beautiful and powerful ? Truthfulness. For a moment he was silent ; and then, in a deep but subdued voice he said :

“ I may never see you again, but I shall never forget you, nor the words you have spoken. Many a time they will raise the drooping spirit of the poor emigrant, or be echoed in something of their hopeful influence, to others depressed and harassed like himself. And if, as you say, there be such power in the efforts of an individual, towards the realization of an universal good, those at home will surely find it. On society, woman’s example is especially needed. You, Beatrice Lester, have, therefore, rightly chosen the path marked out for you. Oh ! that its thorns may never be felt by one, who knows so well how to convert those thorns to flowers for others—may it be to you, here and hereafter, as to others—blessed ! ”

And then, moving a step towards Amy,

“ Farewell, dear sister—earliest friend—sweet con-

soler," he said. "Be happy. Farewell!" And folding his arms for the first time in his life around her, and straining her to his heart, he kissed her once, twice, thrice. But when he released her childish form, it was strangely heavy. Beatrice received it into her embrace, but all consciousness had fled the unhappy girl.

"Go," said Miss Lester to Eustace, still holding Amy to her bosom. "Go. It is better so, believe me. The anguish would be but uselessly renewed by your remaining. Nay, look not so disconsolate," she added, while tears flowed from her own eyes, "everything shall be done to restore, to soothe, to make her happy. I pledge myself, solemnly, to fulfil this trust. With the first ray of morning you shall have tidings of her; you shall not sail in ignorance of the condition of one so loved."

The advice was wise, but painful to follow. Soothed, however, by the promise of early intelligence, he obeyed.

But the return to life was very terrible for Amy Lyle.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Emigrant Ship—Husband and Wife—The Old Pauper—
Sickness and Luxury—The Nurse—Delirium and Despair—
Amy come back again.

THE emigrant ship sailed the following day, with Eustace Neville on board, amid the evidences of grief for the Father-land, and hope of the unknown; the desolation of those who knew that their advanced age would never permit a return to the dear old familiar scenes of childhood and youth; and the buoyancy of some few, with whom youth and health were the elements of confidence in an arduous future.

Eustace was not so absorbed in self, as to render him impervious to sympathy in the agony of parting between parents and children, friends, brothers, and sisters,—some of the dearest ties that can be rent asunder.

One young woman, the wife of a brutal-looking

man, and the mother of a little unconscious child, who was amused, in his happy ignorance, with all the movement and bustle on that heavily-laden deck, (heavily-laden with something more than its mere human freight) was enclosed for the last time, in the arms of a poor old pauper-looking father, who, with tears stealing slowly down his furrowed cheek, had come to bid her good-bye.

The stolidity of the husband, a stalwart, but degraded-looking man, was remarkable. He stood by, with his hands in his pockets, rolling the tobacco in his mouth from cheek to cheek, while, for his sake, this beloved of the parent, this sole remaining prop to his infirmity and age, the solitary representative of a time when a home, and independence, and affectionate wife were his—all very humble, it is true, but oh! how dear!—was undergoing, in conjunction with that parent, a bitterness almost worse than death.

Yea, much worse for the poor old man. For did he not know the troubles his child, though uncomplaining, had gone through—did he not read the signs aright of her heavy eyes and sunken cheek? Had he not long suspected that the fragile, uncomplaining woman, she, whose childhood had been so docile and meek, whose love and pretty ways had been so fondly cherished in the little old home, by himself and her dead mother, was the victim of intemperance and ill-usage?

Poor, powerless old man ! Yes : it would have been better to your short-sightedness, to have laid her long ago in the grave, to have left her, reverently, there, years before the day which now returns to your memory—the day you walked with her behind the humble coffin of your wife, two real mourners left to comfort each other.

And the little grandchild too ! Just old enough to lisp your name, just strong enough to climb up to your knees, and just wise enough to love you for your kind looks and words, and the toys and cakes which you bought him with the very few coins which happened to come into your hands, so long unused to the touch and possession of money. Oh ! it is very dreadful ; will hurry you on to the pauper's grave, where no child will drop a tear, nor any friend be near to mark the spot. And all for that man, to whose selfish nature no corner of the earth can be free from a coarse temptation.

For such sufferers, this world has no consolation ; the finest philosophy which does not soar above its wisdom, cannot find a remedy. Where can the reconciliation be found but in Heaven and its Word ?

But leaving Eustace to his mission, (an office which brought its work and opportunity, you see, even before the vessel was under weigh), I must back to Amy Lyle.

When life and reason returned to her, and the first

dim comprehension of strangers and a strange place around her, gave way to a clear understanding of her position—the certainty that *he* had gone—she determined to veil the secret of an unreturned affection; she did not desire, even had it been possible, to cast it out; but she resolved to hide it: aye, deep in the recesses of her own aching heart, there to lie cherished, but unknown, until death; death to her, though not she imagined, to *it*. The fear was almost morbid with which she regarded the possibility of Miss Lester suspecting this concealed truth; and the first effort of returning consciousness was to avert any supposition her evidence of extreme excitement might have suggested.

She had heard, while lying still with closed eyes, the whispered explanation to a medical attendant who had been hastily summoned, of ‘recent illness,’ and an allusion to ‘depressing circumstances;’ so, with a presence of mind strangely at variance with the extreme physical debility which was one cause of the length of time all sign of animation was suspended, and which prevented the possibility of motion even yet, she resolved to shelter herself and the sense of her wretchedness beyond the reach of medicine, beneath the incidental and plausible statement. Her subsequent submission to every method that skill and extreme kindness could suggest to remedy the evidences of bodily ailment reversed the notion of cause and effect,

in those employed so anxiously about her; and towards morning Beatrice gladly and gratefully fulfilled her promise to the emigrant by sending the last favourable bulletin from the physician in attendance on Amy Lyle.

So the ship sailed with Eustace on board. But the struggle was too violent for the delicate frame of one he regarded as a sister. After some little time, during which she moved and acted in the new scene around her as one in a dream (a hideous dream to her) affection and science were baffled by a sudden return of her worst physical symptoms; which, as their only antidote on earth was beyond the power of either, completely obtained the mastery. Then came the terrible struggle between life and death. Beatrice Lester was the constant attendant of that sick room. True to her trust, she watched night and day; and, to the alarm of her old friend, Mrs. Seymour, and her dependants, refused to take rest or refreshment beyond its threshold.

One night, as she was so watching, Amy stirred in her feverish sleep. Beatrice gently started forward to render assistance if required. The eyes of the invalid were open for a moment, but they did not behold the face so tenderly bent down towards them. Brilliant, but unconscious of any actual presence, they seemed to look out on something imperceptible but to them. A smile of unspeakable sweetness

parted the fevered lips—and then—“Eustace,” they murmured.

“Eustace—oh—my love! I had dreamed that thou wert gone!”

The watcher sprung back as if stung. She pressed her hand upon her heart; then, breathlessly, again leaning forward, she beheld the sufferer sleeping more calmly than for many hours, with the softened radiance of some sweet content still upon her flushed face and brow. And Beatrice, who looked upon her, was pale as death.

“I see how it is;” she murmured, “there is something more than delirium here. She loves—she loves—ah! how could it be otherwise!” then she buried her face in her hands, but her slight figure, beautiful and supple as that of a Creole, trembled with some unutterable excitement; but, after a pause, eloquent of great anguish, she uncovered her face and brow; oh! how pale they were by the glimmer of the night lamp burning in the sick chamber! Her lips were open, but her fine features seemed stricken into marble by strong emotion.

“And I—I have helped to separate him from her!” she exclaimed, “I—with a fatal blindness—a blindness for which I am accountable: for—by what was it caused?” and then a deep, burning blush overspread her face, even to the roots of the hair which she had pushed back in her agonizing excite-

ment, "I have sent him away. I thought not of this poor girl—I thought but of him—and—and myself."

Then, humbled and abased, as if the whole world were looking into the most secret recesses of her heart and conscience, and sinking into a low chair by the side of the bed, with her hands clasped loosely together, (unnerved, as her whole frame, by the reaction of a mighty struggle), "I had never forgotten him," she continued; then thus—at intervals. "He seemed ever present with me—yes, since the day he saved my life, and since the moment we stood together hand in hand by the dry and silent fountain:—I thought, wretched that I am, I thought to test myself by his absence—I dreamed, selfish that I was, of raising his own self-respect by self-reliance and experience. Oh, shame, shame! how negligent of this his companion through long years, and—" then springing to her feet in fresh agony. "Oh, merciful Heaven!" she ejaculated, "and now she may die! I shall have her life to answer for! Oh—thought, terrific and insupportable. Spare her—spare her!"

And Beatrice Lester sunk on her knees, burying her face on the pillow on which lay her unconscious protégée and rival!

At last she rose. Again she gazed on the sleeping Amy Lyle. Then with a determination which

imparted to her lately trembling form an air of majesty, which caused her eyes to gleam with the peculiar lustre long ago observed by the man who prevented their being closed for ever, and shed the light of a spiritual triumph over the lineaments which had so recently been flushed by the sense of burning shame.

"I have promised to protect her," she said; then raising one hand, while the other was again pressed on her heart as before,

"I vow, at this moment," she added, "I vow to respect her secret, and also to use every means in my power to renew and confirm her happiness; be it thus my task to repair the evil I have unconsciously inflicted!"

Soon after the night recorded, came a horrible fear that even if Amy's life were spared, her reason would be destroyed. The period of this terrific doubt was almost unendurable to Beatrice Lester. None on earth knew, or could ever know, her own need of this girl's perfect restoration; her cause to desire it beyond any ordinary sympathy with suffering which under any form appealed successfully, but painfully, to the fine organization of which an excessive sensibility was the peculiarity. Often, when alone in the dead of night, she would gently take within her own the small transparent hand of the patient, and

watching, by the flickering, shaded light, the young face in the comparative repose of a short, uncertain, feverish slumber, would meditate even unto a misery beyond tears on the painful passages of the short life which had left their agonizing traces on the emaciated form before her.

“Ah!” she would sigh to herself, “the battle of the world has been too strong here. But who can say why this fearful struggle? It is not for those who are only at the portal to surmise what lies beyond. Morally halt, blind, maimed, we lie waiting for the divine and refreshing movement of the waters; for the first breath of dawn, for a first touch of its light. But, surely, this one is of a class most suffering—for suffering must be in proportion to our wants; and social discrepancies can nowhere be felt as by those who, to use the common but expressive phrase, ‘have known better days.’ This small hand, that fragile form, that intellectual brow, and those exquisitely refined features, were never intended for the contact of a hard, rude life, with its grinding selfishness, and contempt of most things but utilitarianism, and success—never mind how gotten.

“Even in the lanes and byways of this great city, such parts of it as that from whence I thought (alas! in an evil moment) to rescue her, are sometimes seen, amid a crew degraded by poverty and crime,

the evidences of a higher nature ; especially in children.

“ It is not a mere fancy of mine, that Nature thus selects, and plants, here and there, a living protest against the ignorance and abuses she has to struggle with among the lowest ; it has been observed, also, by others ; and even conjectured by one, whose path lies among those crowded scenes of human corruption, that these on whom the seal of a superior organization is set—earliest perish in the uncongenial atmosphere ; most readily take their flight to a region, purer than any dream they may have had of pleasant fields and unclouded sky. I cannot recall his words, but the thought struck me—leading me to think of a better development than any reform, or educational scheme can here suggest. And yet—we must keep them as long as we can, for the good of others ; they may help forward a great and glorious work.

“ But this one, alas, was not prepared by antecedent or experience for the strife against Nature ! She did not *dream* of fair fields and sunshine—she *remembered* them ; to her the liberty of life was gone with the pure air, the fragrant flowers ; its enjoyment fled, and its seeming usefulness, with the affections that surround her no longer, and the charities which those who are dead encouraged her to perform ! ”

And then came tears, falling softly and uncon-

sciously, on the brow of the sleeping girl. Stooping down to listen to her breathing, what exquisite love and pity shone then on the face of Beatrice! "Still sleeping! Heaven grant it may help the restoration to ease and peace! But if not—" then after a moment in which the possibility seemed to suspend thought even in her own clear but over-excited brain, she musingly continued,—as if trying to shut it out—

"And yet—how many do I know in this London of our's, in need of equal sympathy, in all things save one—alas! This huge city with its palaces and wide streets, and highly decorated shops, being the heart of our system, Fate seems to gather and centralize there. How complicated, how almost inextricable its life! How electric the shock of the body politic! A palace here, refusing admission to the honest and able man, and a mad-house there, receiving the wreck of disability and disappointment. Gaunt want and utter ignorance in another corner, and the gloomy prison with its contaminating influence standing ready to receive their consequences.

"Talents hired out for bread, under paid and unappreciated by the vulgar minds who use money as the means of trampling on Heaven's gifts, while the servile cunning of mediocrity, applied to loathsome flattery, secures patronage and a provision too often among men and women.

"Yes; sorrow as the consequence of departure from

right, is everywhere around us ; and it needs be that the innocent droop in its atmosphere—but where do we find its faintness so often as among women ? Women—with their tender hearts and quick perceptions ; who have no mode of helping themselves, of stepping aside from the throng which hurries them on ! Ah ! yes—yes—woman's social redemption must be worked out by woman ! And how blessed when the mission lies not with the fallen, but with the pure ; not with the dark in mind and heart, but with the intelligent. To support and not to reclaim.

“Oh ! Amy Lyle ! Amy Lyle ! come back to life and reason ; that the wealth which is so responsible to me, may bring a new happiness to my home and heart. It is ever better to give than to receive ; and it is a singular privilege to administer to the sympathy of a perfect equality !”

And Amy did come back ! After a most critical crisis, her body was at ease, and her mind returned from those dark regions into which it had wandered.

One by one, bodily power, perception, memory, hope, and fear, re-assumed their sway, and although Beatrice, with a singular earnestness, forbade any mention of her own long watching, its secret was revealed to the invalid in the pale cheek and sunken eyes which appeared to be the evidences of many a

sleepless night, and hour of extreme solicitude. How grateful was the poor, weak girl for the care which had helped to save her from the grave ! How could she ever repay this beautiful and noble creature for the untiring devotion of her every faculty to cherish and preserve the life which, without her aid, must have become extinct ! The embers had, indeed, burned very low ; the light emitted was but the feeblest spark, liable, at any moment, to vanish, and leave nothing but darkness behind !

Miss Lester shrunk visibly from any expression of such gratitude, although her good work still continued. Unobtrusively she proposed, and carried out, many a little plan for soothing and cheering that period intervening between extreme illness and the possibility of a return to congenial occupation which many have found so tedious. She knew the extreme importance of this interregnum, as regards the future condition, moral and physical, of a patient. Many people fancy when the immediate danger is over, that there is no longer need of unremitting attention, forgetful of the weariness consequent on extreme debility, and the depression caused by the imperfectly restored physical and mental functions.

But, though conscious of the many devices suggested by affection and intelligence, and carried out by wealth, for lightening the tedium of an invalid apartment, Amy's mind was some little time in re-

covering anything like an active tone. Its powers were palsied by her great grief; and perhaps it was better so; for with the numbness over her faculties she was comparatively unconscious of the sharp anguish, which had brought about her illness. Not of its cause, that was ever present; *he* was never absent from her mind; her mental vision hovered around him sleeping or waking; but the keen agony which had struck through her heart in the moment of farewell was spared her; that sharp, terrible sense, that seemed to cleave asunder the soul from the body.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Hideous Monster—Love Dumb.

BUT it came again at last, that sharp pang ; came when she was alone in the night, for almost the first time since her illness ; and this time it did not annihilate, but it revived and transformed, transformed her inmost being into something, at first, unrecognizable even to herself.

What dark, hideous object is this—what is the meaning of this mocking mask, so suddenly assumed by some face so dear and familiar ? Is it madness that has returned ? Oh ! terror—agony—even outrage unendurable ? She sits up in bed, stretches forth her arms towards some unseen thing ; then, with difficulty repressing a scream, sinks back, almost convulsively, on the pillow. The diseased imagination had triumphed for a time over the weakened body.

Amy was jealous. Yes, jealousy had stepped in, in all its ugliness, between her benefactress and herself; suddenly, but surely for a time, shutting out the light of returning peace and health; blighting the prospects that a beneficent love was calling up around her, wresting the magic wand of kindness from the hand which had exercised it in her behalf.

“Oh yes! I see, and feel, and understand it now;” was the frantic exclamation of this horrible belief, “it was to her he addressed his glowing words of thanks that last evening—to Beatrice that he dedicated any hope in the future. She had power to raise his soul from its long depression—to inspire him with a new energy—to reveal to him the mystery of himself—and animate him with more confidence in the destiny which such a revelation proclaimed! She—the stranger—could do all this. I can see him now—I shall never forget him—gazing into her face, and holding her hand, while she stood, in the strangeness of her strength and beauty, as the prophetess of his fate. And I, the poor weak Amy, was forgotten, or was endured as an inevitable incumbrance. And yet, what might in my love! Oh!—Why has it been so impotent, to cheer, to save, to forward the object for which no suffering would have been too great? Eustace—Eustace! How could our past and its thousand sympathies

be blotted out, as it seemed to be, from your memory so suddenly? How could you permit wealth, and station, or even genius, to interfere—when we were all in all to each other? Do you not remember the days and scenes of an earlier and a happier time—how we roamed in the fields and pleasant places afar off—how we listened to the voices that are now silent—and were united in joy or grief, and in the blessings breathed over us by the dear lips of the dead! And then, our struggles together in this Babylon—our studies—our humble pleasures—our little home—our loss of that other dear one—our misery—and even our starvation? Oh! why have you left me here, surrounded by hitherto unknown luxury, while you are fighting the world's fight in other regions—the thought of her on whom your poor Amy is dependent, urging you on to conquer? But—” and she started afresh, stabbed by some other recollection deadly to her peace, “but was it not even thus years ago—did she not stoop like some strange shadow, from her eyrie, on our home and hearth? Yes—now—I remember; you were not yourself for long and long after that visit to the Castle and its mysterious inhabitants; it seems, now, as a line of demarcation, a boundary stream, between Youth and Manhood. You ceased to smile:—grave and silent, your thoughts were away from the things and people which had formerly

given you such joy. You might not understand it then—but I—I see and know it now—you had met your destiny !” Sinking back on her soft couch, the unhappy girl was outwardly quiet for some time ; her eyes were closed, but, from their quivering lids, a heavy tear stole now and then on the cheek still so thin but flushed with excitement. Her hands were crossed on her bosom, but far different was the heart wildly beating beneath to the repose of which this was something like the monumental attitude. That heart, once wont to be so regular and placid in all its movements, was now filled, as it were, with fire. All was in chaos. The flame of jealousy touched with its lurid glare the wreck of the past, and imaginary scenes in the days to come. It was a consuming, but not a purifying fire. Its ashes were those of a world of tenderness and child-like hope ; the phoenix that rose from them—a power of fixed, concentrated determination—a love of self perfectly strange and unknown in the experience and former life of the gentle, the good, and happy Amy Lyle. At length, instigated by unendurable fantasy, she sprung from the bed ; not, as on the vigil of her departure from the lowly lodging, to look around with an affection, never so intense as at the time of parting, on homely objects ;—to hang with a mournfulness which was all of love, over the unsightly and withered flowers,

whose dry, blackened stalks were illumined by a halo of sanctified association with the living and the dead—but to gaze with a look of something like abhorrence on the elegant arrangements with which hospitality and kindness had encompassed her.

“And oh! it is more than I can bear,” she exclaimed, with a wild excited glance, “thus to be made the pet and plaything of this wondrous Beatrice Lester! Poor as I am, weak though I be, ignorant, devoid of her grace and beauty, I cannot live here—it stifles, and kills me. To eat the bread of dependence cast down by the one *he* loves is intolerable; to endure her charity—to be clothed by her consideration!—Ah! what, after all, can she know of the sorrow she has never felt—how feel for the want she has never endured!—She may have a theory for your future, Eustace, but it is I who, practically, have shared the hard experience of your necessity. And do you think if *I* had possessed this abundant wealth, the signs of which are everywhere beneath the roof above me, that *I* would have permitted you to go forth a wanderer over the wide seas?—Love like mine is dumb; it lies deep in my heart and cannot make itself heard: but it is easy for a sympathy like hers to be articulate; and yet the one is cast aside, trampled down, unheeded as worthless;—and the other is the guiding star of your onward way!”

CHAPTER XIX.

Sabbath Night at Sea—A Magdalen—A Simple Story.

A SABBATH night at sea. The glorious Tropical sunset had passed. Immediately the orb of day had sunk below the horizon of sky and ocean, the twilight had given place to night; but to a night unassociated with gloom.

So suddenly, however, had the curtain of nature fallen, that some of the waves in the track of the emigrant ship, were still dancing in a stream of golden light, while the silver crescent of the queen of night arose, momentarily, more and more in the ascendant. The stars, too; large, low, wondrously luminous, bespangled the unclouded, deep blue sky above: and the waves, with their solemn chaunt, took a still deeper and richer tint; while every ripple, and the foam of the waters parting for a moment to admit the path of the large vessel with its cargo of adven-

turous humanity, sparkled beneath the rays of the moon, until every object became, by her radiance, as distinctly visible as beneath the light of day, in a colder and more northern clime.

A myriad sparkles of phosphorescent brightness, wonderful, but changing and fugitive, formed a strange and starry track for the travellers to the Unknown and Untried land, to which their course through these latitudes (previously unheard of by many) lay; while the dolphins were distinctly beheld in their beauty, so strange to the wanderers from other regions, far beneath the surface of that boundless, fathomless ocean.

Eustace Neville was leaning against the side of the vessel, wrapt in contemplation of the scene and its vastness.

Evening Divine Service had just been performed, and some of its sublime passages still lingered in his ear, and echoed in his heart.

"Yes, surely," he exclaimed, "His wonders are seen in the 'great waters;' and amid such manifestations as these, the great *Laudate Dominum* of the Psalmist can be understood—

"Praise Him, all ye angels of His: praise Him all His Host.

Praise Him, sun and moon: praise Him all ye stars of light."

"The inspired bard had beheld the wonders of creation under a wider, more stirring, and marvellous

aspect than anything that can be imagined by the poor people of a darker and different clime, who yet feel their souls stir within them, when merely hearing the words read within the walls of their city churches. If they could but enter into a scene like this, what would be the cry of worship and astonished veneration?—

“Praise Him.

Praise Him, all ye heavens; and ye waters that are above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord: for He spake the word, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.”

And he thought of Columbus. How the mariner of old had been led on to explore the unspeakable and marvellous creation to which he penetrated through the mists of ignorance, the intolerance of narrow bigotry, and the threats even of those who at length were launched on the untried, and unploughed deep, with himself.

He thought of those frail vessels sailing onward and ever onward, their pilots knowing not whither; of the terror which beset their men, when, finding themselves beyond the sights and sounds of anything ever heard of, or familiar; of their brave leader's observation of the smallest sign on the world of waters around him. What a lesson for vain-glorious

humanity in every time, as to putting aside the "little things" as unworthy its observation.

And finally, Eustace beheld in his mental vision, the man so wise, so strong, so enterprising—successful! And celebrating that success by planting the Cross—emblem of humility—on the virgin soil, with its background of strange scenery, and new foliage; and again, the glorious chant of praise resounded, as it fell, then, for the first time, on that spice-laden air, and awoke the distant echoes with the Truth, of which all nature in every age and clime, is the beautiful response, and unfailing emblem.

But the sound of weeping interrupted the dreamer. He listened for a moment, not knowing from whence the low wail, which seemed that of a woman in distress, proceeded.

Then, moving more towards the middle of the deck, and passing round a heavy coil of rope, he perceived a young female, whom he had often observed before, and with some interest, supporting herself against it, and crying bitterly. Gently approaching her, Eustace asked the cause of a grief so in discord with the glorious view around them. And truly, there was something very inharmonious in this cry of pain with the signs of light, and love, mercy, and power.

"Thank you, Sir," she sobbed in reply, "oh! thank you for all your kindness. Others, on board

this ship, know it well beside myself. But my sister is not yet reconciled to me; nor is she contented with the step we have taken in coming out at all."

Eustace now remembered to have seen a companion with this fair and delicate young woman, whom he supposed, despite an entire want of personal resemblance, to be her sister. The other was dark—almost fierce in her expression and deportment; generally gloomy and lowering; while this one was shy, timid, pretty, and retiring.

"But was it not with her consent that you embarked?" asked Eustace.

"Oh—yes—Sir; because there was no other plan that she could propose."

"To whom are you going? Have you friends in Australia?" inquired Mr. Neville.

"Our parents live there;" she answered, "they have been settled out there for many years, and have, I believe, done pretty well. But we were left, when children, in the old country, with our grandmother."

"And she—" suggested Eustace.

"Is dead;" she added.

"How long?" he asked.

"For many a dreary night and day:" she answered—and then, with a fresh burst of grief, she continued, "oh! I didn't think of time;—even now I'm not sure whether it is three or four years; once I used to remember better; but now, I only recollect

one bright beautiful season which seems long ago, and know the dark dreariness which cannot be lightened even by such a wonderful sight as this;" and she looked up, for a moment, with her tearful eyes, and then on the waters below.

"But such dreariness," gently answered Eustace, "though too dense, perhaps, for any visible light to penetrate, is not impervious to the rays of the Heavenly and Eternal; you must not, therefore, give way to this despair; whatever its cause. Even if of sin," he hesitatingly added, for he feared to touch the wound, "there is a Mercy most Mighty, a Power which has bruised the serpent's head."

"Ah yes—I know—that is, I have heard," she replied—"I have heard of the Magdalene."

"Then you will soon rejoin your parents?" continued Eustace, in a cheerful tone; for he was anxious to assure her that he had unwittingly trespassed on the ground of a seared memory, and, perhaps, of a sacred repentance.

"There is no doubt of that," she answered, "and yet—they do not—they cannot know all. It's *them* I think of—Sir—what will they say—oh! will *they* ever forgive?"

Before Eustace could add another word of comfort, however, she continued:

"But I have a letter to my mother, Sir, and on that rests my hope, any hope I know on earth. It

was written by a great, and good, and most gentle lady in London,—who found out all my shocking story; and instead, like the others, of going away dismayed; or of giving me cold, hard, advice, and leaving me to starve, or of wishing to shut me up in some dreadful place where my sin would be known, and where I should find others who might have done even worse, she told me of the mercy and redemption you speak of; and clothed me, fed me, lodged me in a decent house, and employed me. Even now, her care is following me in the wake of this ship, Sir; for not knowing whether my sister, who she also found out and rescued, would consent to go on with me when we come into port, she has given a sum of money to the Captain to entrust, with us both, to some person who is going up the country, to where our parents are settled. But the letter, Sir, the letter; that is better than all; for she said she was almost confident it would reconcile my mother, and make her kind to us both—and oh! Sir—if you had seen her when she said it, with the gleam of such love, or something as beautiful, and as good, in her bright eyes swimming with tears—tears, Sir, in parting for ever with such a vile thing as I am.”

There was something in this story which made the heart of Eustace Neville beat almost audibly. Was it possible—could it be—Beatrice Lester, who had

rescued this unfortunate woman from a living tomb? He could not ask the name; something, he knew not what, prevented; but who else could answer the description he had just heard in the thrilling tones of humility and grief?

Presently, the woman continued:

“When I first saw this lady, Sir, it was at the house of Madame B——, the dress-maker, where I was at work; for that was my business before my grandmother died. I was considered a good hand in cutting out and finishing off, some parts of court costume, which many people do not understand. Well, Sir, one morning, (it was very hot, and the apprentices’ low room was crowded to suffocation) I was called up-stairs into the show-room. I was very ill, Sir, and dreadfully miserable; but I was glad to escape from that close place, where we used to sit from early morning to long past midnight, sometimes, even to follow the cross forewoman who had beckoned me. I was told to bring my work, a dress for a duchess, with me. When I reached the show-room, with its large looking-glasses, and soft, rose-coloured curtains, and gilded chairs, I felt rather giddy; but, among a great many other ladies who were standing, or sitting about, generally gossiping, I saw one who did not seem to belong to any of them, though she was much more elegant than anybody I had ever

seen; but not at all in the style we used to manufacture in that house.

"Madame B—— was speaking to her, and it seemed to me, that she paid her very particular attention.

" 'Oh! This, Madam, is the dress for your friend, the Duchess;' said Madame B——, as I came forward, with the costly drapery hanging over my arm, 'I hope that you think her Grace will approve it.'

"The lady turned towards me one of the most noble faces I had ever seen. It was not that she was what is commonly called very beautiful, but she looked, Sir, as if she had never told a lie in her life. She smilingly examined the robe, as Madame B—— displayed it to the best advantage, and I fell a little way into the background.

"At length she said:

" 'Well, Madame, if you wish me to be candid, I do not think the shade of the trimmings will be perfectly becoming to the Duchess, nor the form of the sleeve. Permit me,' she added, with a little laugh, 'to alter the latter;' and, in a way which shewed that she was amused by the strangeness of her occupation, she managed, in a minute, a great change for the better in the unfortunate sleeve. 'There,' she said, 'that will be more in keeping with the peculiarity of my graceful friend's head-dress. You

ought to consult old pictures, Madame,' she smilingly continued, 'as well as modern fashion books. How perfect the *ensemble* in many of them—and not at all *outré* in modern costume, if suited, as in this case, to the general style of the wearer.'"

"‘Ah! Mademoiselle has such wonderful taste,’ and Madame sighed. ‘What a fortune it would have been to one in my profession!’

"‘Well, well;’ said the lady, ‘but I promise you not to let it interfere with your vocation;’ and, still in a gay mood, she was about to depart, when she caught sight of me; and, after looking earnestly a moment, with quite a different expression on her sweet face to what it had before, she came towards me, and said in a low, sympathizing voice, ‘I am sure you are not well!’

"‘I was quite surprised, Sir, and something in her manner, so unlike anything I was used to among ladies, made the tears come into my eyes.

"‘And, perhaps,’ she added, while stooping down and helping me to re-arrange the dress which had been handed back to me, as it again hung upon my arm ‘perhaps, you are not happy; but I will see you again.’

"And she moved away towards Madame B——, whose attention had been claimed, in the meanwhile, elsewhere, and spoke to her in French. I do not understand the language perfectly, Sir; but I had

picked up some words from being so much with Madame B——, and, as I passed out, almost bewildered with the look and kindness of this gentle lady, I heard something like a remonstrance about late hours, closed windows, and the other evils from which the poor girls in the work-room below were suffering so fearfully. She kept her promise, she saw me again; and, in time I found enough courage, which I never could have believed, to tell her my story. It was the old tale, Sir, of seduction, desertion, and the awful path of wrong afterwards. But *she* did not shrink away from me, in disgust. Oh, no!—she had me removed from the house where I told her that I lodged, into a comfortable, clean, respectable home: and, in time, having found out the truth about my parents, and caused my sister to be sought and found, she has sent us away, Sir, from temptation, at her own expense, while the only hope we know for this world or the next, she has been the blessed means of bringing home to our hearts. But, after all, we are only two, Sir, of the many who have been snatched from the burning, downward path, (a path where the horrors are inconceivable and worse at every step, but seemingly endless, hopeless; without the possibility of rest or turning; but onward—yet lower and lower ever;)—by the hand of—Beatrice Lester.”

And the woman became silent; a repose had stolen over her attitude and manner, as she rested against the heavy coil of ropes, and, with eyes which had ceased to weep, looked up at the wondrous, starry heavens, and listened to the soft murmur of the moonlit waves, which were cleft asunder for the moment by the goodly ship; then closed—leaving, unlike the earth, no trace of man's onward way.

"And you will ever remember her; pray for her;" at length, said Eustace in a low voice.

"She told me to do so, Sir;" answered the woman, "and she promised not to forget, the poor outcast."

Eustace Neville returned to his solitary post at the side of the vessel. His thoughts were no longer of Columbus, but of a Christian woman's mission in the nineteenth century. "Her care is following me in the wake of this ship," were the words which recurred most readily from the narrative to which he had just listened. His heart was very full. Again the bright image of Beatrice seemed to stand beside him, with the words and look with which she had encouraged him during that last night in England. Every accent, every attitude, seemed indelibly imprinted in a cherished corner

of his memory. And did the love of the sister-friend, Amy, also 'follow in the wake of the ship?' Did he dream of her child-like gentleness, or imagine aught of her almost fierce despair? Could it be that the love so potent had pierced through intervening space, and apparent impossibility, to meet a truth? or was it the mere fantasy of a disordered brain that Beatrice was the secretly best beloved of the poor emigrant—the lowly wanderer?

CHAPTER XX.

The Duchess—Shakspeare Perverted—Suspicion—The “Temple of Fame.”

ONE beautiful morning, at the beginning of the London season of 1851, a small, but perfect carriage containing two ladies, and drawn by thorough-bred ponies, slowly pursued its pleasant way by the Serpentine in Hyde Park.

A servant was in attendance, whose costume, though plain, was as faultless as the horse he rode; but his guard might well have been dispensed with, as it was long before the hour when this spot is wont to be frequented by “*the world*.” The lady who so cleverly, but daintily, held the reins of the fairy-equipage was charming-looking in the extreme, but somewhat difficult of description, as her fascination seemed to consist more in manner and that “*je ne sais quoi*,” which is, if I remember rightly, somewhere proclaimed by Montesquieu as indispensable;

and triumphant 'over a difficulty' when the fact of regular beauty has been denied.

She was small, bright and piquante. Her hair, of a chesnut hue, was turned back from the face in the mode so prevalent since in France, but becoming to so few. Her eyes were dark grey, and animated; while the exquisite figure was well displayed in the rather close-fitting dress, so quiet in its colour, so charming in its freshness, and so exquisite, to the very delicate gloves on the small hands which guided the spirited but docile ponies.

Her companion, though equally nice in her appointments, was evidently a little more careless of appearance; but not one of the few stragglers then and there about, whether governesses with their young charges, men lounging and meditating on 'what next and next' in their fate, or young ladies taking their constitutional beauty-walk, but manifested some sign of the attraction to be found in her earnestly intellectual face, and unconsciously graceful attitude.

For some time both these ladies were (for a wonder, perhaps) silent; at length, the fair charioteer, thus began:

"You are positively provoking, Beatrice; to think of another season, and you, with all your advantages—to say, nothing of mine"—(she archly put in), "still on my hands!"

"My dear Duchess," answered Beatrice Lester, laughing. "What shall I do to please you?"

"Why marry to be sure," answered her Grace, suddenly whipping the ponies, with a silken cord that just tickled their ears.

"Marry!" ejaculated the younger lady, in playful mock-heroic. "Nay,

"By innocence I swear, and by my youth,
I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth—
. Nor never none
Shall master be of it, save I alone."

"Oh! shocking!" exclaimed the Duchess of Ayrton; "horrible to pervert Shakspeare in that manner, Beatrice. And then the blank, too, of your forced omission which I shall perforce take as some sort of *admission*; but, prithee, dear friend, with all your philanthropy, do not meditate the 'masculine usurp'd attire' of the Viola you quote, to carry out your views of single blessedness."

"No fear of that;" was the merry answer, "I like what the Duke (but not *your* Duke) calls, 'my woman's weeds' too well."

"And if you shewed less taste in them," answered the Duchess, "I should love you less than I do. And that it is," she vivaciously continued, "so extremely tormenting in you, that power over one's affection, that mastery over even one's actions, that

absolute authority, approaching tyranny, leaving no privilege of aye or no."

"But 'tis you," replied Beatrice, in the same tone, "who manifest the wish for such unconstitutional usurpation just now ; depriving me of freedom in the disposal of myself."

"You mistake;" was the smiling rejoinder, "whatever my wishes, I leave your fate in your own hands ; only, pray do, for the sake of variety, and in pity to a worn out chaperon like myself, contrive to vary the long list of rejections by a wise and timely acceptance."

"But of what, and of whom ?" demanded Beatrice.

"I am puzzled, dazzled by the multiplicity of your opportunities," was the answer. "You love courage, and I know a soldier—"

"'Dubbed with unhacked rapier, and on carpet consideration,'" replied Beatrice.

"Well then—you are zealous for social reform, and a great statesman loves you."

"'Who cons State without book, and utters it by great swarths—'" was the response.

"But you venerate genius," urged the Duchess, "and a most successful author is sighing for you."

"'Who is the best persuaded of himself,'" quoth Beatrice ; "'so crammed, as he thinks with excellencies, that it is his ground of faith, that all, that look on him, love him.'"

"The faith of the present day;" admitted her Grace, "as well as in the time of that man for every day and circumstance, Shakspeare, with whom you are in league against me this morning; but it is a faith, my gentle Beatrice, on which your revenge finds (always I observe) notable cause to work."

"But you admit my difficulties?" pleaded Miss Lester in a coaxing tone.

"No—indeed I do not;" briskly returned the Duchess, "I will only allow that you, with your extraordinary prejudices—or clear-sightedness, (if you expect me to be complimentary) and transcendentalism, and radicalism, are a difficulty in yourself, and a stumbling-stone in my way. But depend upon it," she added, menacingly, "there will come at last 'The Hour and the Man.'"

"Those are just what such dreamers as myself are looking for," answered Beatrice.

"Oh! pray don't interpret me, in any way, according to your social theories," pleasantly remonstrated the other lady, who looked the very essence of aristocratic exclusiveness, "but tell me, dear Beatrice, how fares that Amy Lyle who is domiciled so cozily beneath your roof. Is she quite well, now?"

A shade of seriousness overspread the face of Miss Lester, chasing away all the merriment of its late expression, as she replied,

"Yes—quite well—at least, I think—I hope so ; but, I fear, not happy."

"Not happy !" reiterated the Duchess, "and with you !"

"Alas !" answered Beatrice, "it will be long, I fear, ere the present can drive away the shadows of the past."

"But I have a strange idea," was the reply, "concerning that young girl ; and I do not know, Beatrice, that I am right even in giving it utterance."

Then, seeing great attention, surprise, and some little curiosity visible on the face of her companion, the charming, chatty little Duchess continued :

"I was looking at her the other morning when awaiting you, in your own peculiar snugger, the boudoir. She had risen from her easel when I entered, but begging her to be seated, she resumed her occupation, and so was not aware of the interest her delicate figure, and classical, though rather child-like, head and face inspired. It was painful, though, to perceive how transparently thin her hand, and hectic the hue of her cheek. 'Surely,' thought I, 'these cannot be the symptoms of suffering long past, and now so lovingly atoned for !' for really," (interpolated her Grace, with a little shake of her pretty head, towards her friend) "really, Beatrice, you do quite spoil and over-indulge that young girl." Then not allowing time for disclaimer, she continued,

"Well—while I was looking at her and thinking what a change you had effected in her position, you entered; and without scarcely deigning to look at me," (and the Duchess affected a little pout) "you marched straight up to Miss Lyle's easel, exclaiming, 'How glad I am, dear Amy, to see you employed in the manner in which you so excel,' and putting your arm around her neck, as a sister, you kissed her. Then, remembering my existence, you turned to me, and commenced some morning salutation; but of what nature, I scarcely know; for my attention was distracted by something which you had not noticed, or to which you might, for aught I know—be habituated; a certain most strange look on the face of your protégée."

"On the face of dear Amy! What look?" exclaimed Miss Lester.

The Duchess dropped her voice as she answered:

"Of dislike to you."

"Dislike to me!" ejaculated Beatrice.

"It seems impossible," was the answer in a loving tone, "it seems impossible to those who know you; but I fear, and therefore warn you of it, my friend. That young girl does not love you."

The cheek of Beatrice became pale, and a heavy tear rested in her downcast eye. She was silent.

"I fear," said her companion, after some time, "that I have pained you, my dear girl. Forgive

me ; but does not anything in your recollection, bear witness to my supposition ?”

“ I really scarcely know — I was thinking,” faltered Beatrice. “ For some time past, Amy has certainly appeared restless — but *that* was so natural in a world new to her. At one period, too, during the last few months, she very much desired to gain an independence by her former profession (and, indeed, despite my representations, I do not think she has relinquished the idea) but *that*, though not now necessary, none could disapprove. She is always grave and silent, but *that*, recalling her touching story, enhances the interest she inspires.”

“ But *that* is all of her,” interposed the Duchess, “ I want to hear of *yourself* (a subject you will never dilate upon) as regards this girl.”

“ I never thought whether she loved *me* ;” was the answer, in the same musing tone. “ I never paused to think of that, although I believe the hope that she did so, must have been unreasonably strong, from the pain a contrary fear inflicts.” Then, as if apologetically for the absent, “ But, indeed, it is sometimes a long time before the feelings can resume their natural tone, after repeated and great shocks ; still longer, perhaps, for the heart to contract a new affection. Poor Amy ! If she love me not, it proves how deeply she has been tried, and how zealously I ought to strive and gain her love. Perhaps, too, I have

been mistaken in my mode of treatment. Believing, with her medical attendant, that too much seclusion was bad for her, I prevailed on her, with difficulty, to enter scenes, and mix with people new to her." And then, after another painful pause, "I would that I knew the means of making her happy! To me she is a solemn trust. Not love me! It shall not be always so."

The last few disjointed sentences were uttered in a voice almost inaudible; breaking away unconsciously from the unselfish heart of the speaker.

The Duchess furtively glanced towards her with an affectionate interest, and something even of reverence. She was secretly grieved at the pain she had inflicted, and inwardly blamed herself for not having sufficiently taken into consideration the exquisitely sensitive nature of which, during the last few years, she had known such proofs. Anxious to divert Miss Lester's mind from the train of thought into which a few careless words had led it, she pointed to the view of the (first) Crystal Palace, which a turn in their drive commanded.

"Look, Beatrice;" she exclaimed, "how radiant it is beneath this morning's sunshine!"

Beatrice turned in the direction indicated, and gradually all sign of personal feeling, and private

interest, gave place to the enthusiasm with which she always regarded this building. At last she spoke,

"Ah ! my dear Duchess, you just now pronounced Shakspeare 'the man for every day and time,' and so it is always with the real poet ; his aspirations are not circumscribed by Time nor Space. In one age, the 'tender and poetic' individual 'dreams, and prays, and paints, but shuns the ridicule of saying aloud,' that which in after generations shall become a 'law triumphant and established.' So Chaucer had a vision of this 'Temple of Fame.' "

"Aye ; and a strange one too, for us to look-back on, now," responded the Duchess, "although we must thank Pope for making the quaint old English more intelligible to us."

"Yes, he took up the song," answered Beatrice, "as Chaucer echoed it from Petrarch. How strange to trace the light of poetry and truth through all time ! Like a silver stream meandering through some wide and verdant landscape, now bright and easy to be traced in its refreshing course ; then lost to the eye for an interval ; after which, it re-appears where least expected, far off in the valley, or laving the base of the mountain, as it flows away towards the great ocean."

"But this is a strangely practical realization of

Chaucer's dream," said the Duchess, stopping her carriage so as to command a good perspective of

"The temple's outward face,
The wall in lustre and effect like glass,
Which o'er each object casting various dyes
Enlarges some, and others multiplies."

"More than of other visions?" demanded Beatrice, "visions which science and freedom are constantly, though perhaps unconsciously, developing and manifesting in this our day?"

"Perhaps not;" was the answer, "although this, to me, not versed in such matters as yourself, is the transcendent illustration."

"And may we not regard it as the type of a glorious unity?" continued Beatrice. "Of creed, of class, of nations, and of endeavour towards a universal good? Let us look upon this glittering pile as prophetic of a Palace for the People, which shall help forward and crown the daily increasing means of education; an education of the long neglected, though much talked-of masses; and that not merely of the brain, but of the heart."

"Despite the difficulties of State and Sect?" smilingly asked the Duchess.

"And of the Duke of Ayrton too;" replied Beatrice in the same tone, "whose scepticism, imbibed with a parliamentary atmosphere, I well know

on this point." And then, resuming her earnest manner. "For the State," she continued, "its cogitations are being left behind by the healthful energy here, there, and everywhere more and more around us. Schools—how many! And how often the result of individual sympathy and its self denial! With the Ragged Schools, I confess to your indulgent Grace," she added, with a smile, "an especial sympathy; depend upon it they will be, let their defects be what they may, among the best means of keeping down the numbers in our excellent reformatories; which, though so admirable, we do not wish to see overflowing. And of Sect.

" 'If it aid us in *hating* each other
Far better our isle were a desert of sand.
Oh! hate not, but pity, your brother, if folly,
Or creed and conviction have led him astray.' "

"Although a staunch churchwoman, Beatrice," replied the Duchess, "I have always noticed your liberality equal to your zeal."

"Ah!" was the answer, "if the conscientious in their vain disputes could but behold the bond between them! I sometimes think that some great trouble, such as a mighty war, might make them feel the golden link of holy brotherhood."

"But this Palace of Crystal," resumed the Duchess, "speaks but of the fraternization of peace."

"For the present ;" replied Beatrice.

"You are an alarmist ;" exclaimed her Grace, "but I have no fear for the ultimate result as to the progress of which it is the symbol."

"Even if our path be through the battle-field," Beatrice answered. "Remember, in the old palace of Fame, stood the heroes of war among the 'sage historians,' and those, too, 'much suffering heroes,' who have perished from the ingratitude of the time which martyred them."

"But do not forget," continued the Duchess, "if you should ever prove, as I sometimes think you are, my little Beatrice, a true sybil, this peaceful time when

" 'All the nations, summoned to the call,
From diff'rent quarters fill the crowded hall :
Of various tongues the mingled sounds were heard ;
In various garbs promiscuous throngs appear'd.'"

"Nor," resumed Beatrice, "how

" 'The poor, the rich, the valiant and the sage'

were equal and happy beneath the radiant roof ;
not, among the myriads who assembled there, even
excluding that

" 'Smallest tribe I yet had seen ;
Plain was their dress, and modest was their mien.'"

which the poet represents as seeking in the desert,

or beyond the sound of Fame's trumpet, to conceal themselves and their good deeds from observation."

"But the sweet incense of their virtue, and the magnetic ecstasy of their 'secret joy,' were inhaled, and felt by the motley multitude," said the Duchess, "as unostentatious goodness always is." And she glanced very significantly at Beatrice Lester ; while, by a sudden motion of the reins, the fairy carriage was whirled away.

But she only said, "Now don't forget to tell Mrs. Seymour how well 'I was up' with one of your subjects."

CHAPTER XXI.

The Anglo-Indian in the Old Crystal Palace—Familiar Folks and
Old Facts—The Heiress.

At a later hour of the same day two gentlemen were lounging on a seat near the centre fountain within that temple which seemed indeed as if reared by magic. The vast aerial fabric with its wondrous blending of colour and beauty of form, its sparkling waters, its verdant trees, its refreshing flowers, and moving, though not inconvenient, crowd, from every nation on earth, whose banners waved above, could never be forgotten, even if not renewed to the memory, and perpetuated in its great uses, by its successor, that other Palace of Crystal, where the people are made to feel that the Beautiful in Art and Nature is there own; and that the key to the secrets of civilization, with its appliances in manufacture, and the daily wonders of the world of even the common things around them, is placed within an easy grasp.

There, also, they may learn the Philosophy of Order ; for by the growing sympathy between class, of which these mighty buildings past and present form a glorious epoch may be best avoided the hoarse vociferations "For republics and ourselves." Only let the 'noble motto' of royalty and aristocracy be "For God and the people," and there will be no fear of a revolutionary anarchy, which, in its turn, is so prone to reproduce a crushing despotism.

But I digress. The former Crystal Palace needs no description ; but the two gentlemen, left gazing first at its mute tributes from every corner of the world, and then at the stream of human life, in every phase and form before them, may not be altogether so familiar. In age and complexion they formed a contrast to each other. The elder was extremely handsome. Tall, dark, and commanding, he might have been looked upon as a type of manly power, at the first glance ; but the close observer would fail to identify with any grand ideal, certain suspicious lines about the mouth, which even the thick, black moustache failed to conceal, and would be foiled by the coldness of the large, keen, dark eyes. Those brilliant orbs seemed to observe everything, and reflect nothing. They were more glittering, than brilliant ; but at all events they gave back no response, to any challenge from the world without ; although, of that

within, ambition might be supposed the chief element, to judge from the proud, aquiline nose, and haughty carriage of the head. The number of his years, it would have been puzzling to have told. In symmetry of form, he seemed scarcely to have entered the autumn of life; but the self-command and the unmistakeable experience written on that lofty, (but not beautiful) brow, could never have been gained in the mere spring-tide or summer of a genial youth.

His companion was young, frank, and pleasant to look at. The abundance of fair hair tossed back from a face on which sorrow had not yet set its seal, although thought was legible there, fell in a wavy outline towards the back of the head. His teeth were white and even, and often visible through the lips parted by a merry laugh. In dress he was scrupulously nice, though perfectly free from a vulgar over exactness; and a certain something in his bearing gave an undeniable indication of his military calling and its physical discipline. Their conversation was frequent, although its animation was imparted by the youth; who seemed to take the lead in the subjects suggested by the place and people. At length, the elder said:

"But tell me, Villars, who is that pretty woman to whom you first bowed?"

"Which? I have bent my head, you know, more than once."

"There she is again; standing near the brink of the fountain," was the answer. "There; now she is joined by a gentleman, with a very young girl leaning on his arm."

Captain Villars looked in the direction indicated, and replied "Oh! that is the Duchess of Ayrton; it is a sign, Percival, how short has been your residence in England that you don't know her. The gentleman you speak of, (a steady looking one enough—eh!) is her husband. Many years older than her Grace, as you may perceive; though, perhaps, you would hardly take her to be the mother of grown, or growing, up, and coming out daughters. Doubtful, however, whether any of them will equal her."

"She is above the average;" was the admission of the other, who may as well at once be introduced as Major Percival, "but has she no son?"

"No; and the want of an heir is supposed to be deplored; but the world says that she has had other troubles;"

"Of what sort?" asked the Major.

"Why, that matter of fact looking duke of her's—though you would hardly think so, to look at him, now—took to the course; thinking that he would run a race with fortune, as to who should possess the surplus which no son came to

claim, (by all that's unlucky it's a pity that some poor detrimental of the second birth like myself, cannot wedge his feet into a pair of such empty, dainty, baby shoes) and that not content with that course, he had a fling in the stocks, under the rose. But all that is passed now; and he has the courage to thrust his burnt fingers into his portly vest, without wincing at the pain some say they still cost him; and, standing in the lofty regions of the Upper House, he makes, at the proper times, the most proper speeches that can fall from the lips of a 'potent, grave, and reverend signor!'—freezers!"

"I remember to have seen some speech of his, in connection with Eastern politics when I was in India," answered Major Percival, "but I did not read it."

"Of course not," was the reply. "But look now, do you see that tall man with white hair, in a blue surtout, who has just taken off his hat, *en passant*, to the duke?"

"Yes, who is he?" and then the Major added (and let it be observed he always spoke as if he believed his verdict, though delivered in a low quiet tone, incontrovertible); "a remarkably fine head—not easily to be forgotten."

"So it is said," answered Captain Villars, "by those who can remember him thirty years ago. He is known to have been one of the most powerful

speakers in the Lower House. Unlike the Duke of Ayrton, he had no lack of listeners and readers too."

"Have his powers declined then with his years?" asked the stranger to England and its celebrities.

"I should rather think not," was the reply, "but he has been long shelved."

"Why and how?" demanded the Major.

"The 'whys' might come out under four heads," returned young Villars. "But whether envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableness had, or have, anything to do with it or not—he was a star in the time of O'Connell and the Reform Bill."

"He is evidently sarcastic," said the Major, "any one could tell that at this moment; see how some epigrammatic answer is pointed by the smile still lingering on his lips."

"I have heard him praised for benevolence by those who fear his wit."

"A strange mixture," quoth the Major, "but you have not yet told me what malignity did for him."

"Got up a queer charge about some papers that had come mysteriously into his professional possession."

Did Captain Villars fancy it, or did the changing light throw a strange hue over his companion's face?

"But he behaved right well on the occasion," continued the speaker, "he challenged the fullest

inquiry ; and, after eloquently pleading his cause before the House of which he was a member, was triumphantly acquitted. But that, I suppose, was not what others desired."

"And then?"

"Oh! then, after a time, a nice little berth was found for him, which peculiarly necessitated a vigilant control of truth, honesty and order ; but which effectually prevented, and prevents, a possibility of return to the old arena for which, he was so well fitted."

"A political Athlete, chained to a stool!" said the Major.

"And more than once excluded from circumstances which would allow him fair play," was the answer, "although intellectually fresh and vigorous as ever. But all that tradition says of this man only shews the effect of *earnestness* upon the people ; of earnestness whether of manner or conviction."

"But its need?" asked the Major, patronizingly stroking his moustache.

"Why, now consider," resumed the youth, not at all logically, but with a vivacity in strange contrast to the other's lethargy, "we hear of empty churches and corrupt boroughs, because men's consciences (for I really do believe in such appurtenances) are drugged by orthodox prose in the former, or glutted

by bribery in the latter. But let them only be addressed as this one knew how to address them from the hustings, and they are awake and up in an instant—true ‘free, and independent electors.’ Or let a preacher step forth from conventionalism, and tell men, in any queer place, what he believes to be the truth from his heart, not stopping to pick or choose his words, and witness the crowds he ‘draws.’ It’s all very well,” continued the young man, dashing away the fair hair from his forehead, “it’s all very well for the self-satisfied to try and sneer down this sort of thing as irregular, and therefore vulgar; but I should like to see a ‘Right Reverend’ or ‘Most Venerable’ do the same, if he could. Egad! he’d fill this Crystal Palace in no time, and who knows where its echoes might reach?”

“Why, Villars,” said his companion, with a supercilious smile, “I shall expect you to come out as a lecturer soon.”

“And so I would,” he answered, “if I were a live lord like my brother, because then I should be listened to. But, failing that honour, you understand, *I have a raw*, and that helps to sharpen my understanding; oh! nothing like a grievance—even of primogeniture if you will—for pricking on the wits.” Then, after a moment’s pause, the young man continued, “but the man we were talking about

has many friends and many enemies, I believe, amongst different classes—but here comes one who has expressed his extreme appreciation of his powers as an orator, at all events. Now, contemplate that singular man with long hair, in the brown coat, a white hat, and drab boots. Does he not look a man of mark? And so he is. The elegant woman on his arm is his wife, and she is ambitious; but, depend upon it, he will realize her dreams of ministerial power. Delicate in constitution when a boy, he applied himself to literature, (how often, by the bye, some requirement in our condition being left unfulfilled, stimulates us to great achievements in other fields, a discontent, the bridge over which leads to a harvest of success) and he performed great intellectual exploits, his sensible mother aiding and abetting him in a path where he would meet with laurels. Ah! what a stimulus—what an inspiration is a good mother!” (A little wince again from the Major.) “Of an old family and title, he came into a large property after a long minority; earnest, simple in his habits, sincere, and studious, he has always been consistently the advocate of liberal measures.”

“A radical, I suppose,” said the Major, with something like a sneer.

“But a philosopher;” was the answer. “We must respect his sincerity and integrity; the qualities most needed.”

"And seldom found;" was the cool and discouraging rejoinder.

"To be prized the more when met with," pursued the youth; and then he continued. "Now for those qualities, I value that man. I have faith in his principle, and believing it a principle that will triumph over the self-seeking movements of others, I expect to see him, some day, at the head of public affairs. But Life is proverbially short; and it is possible that some idea of it, being especially uncertain in his case, may help to keep him free and clean from the dross of political corruption; so that his fair fame, the bright shield to his memory, may at least be left untarnished; a goodly memento. As a speaker, he is rather too polished for the taste of his constituency. The man with the fine head and white hair, of whom we have been talking, who had to fight his own way in the world with no 'accident of an accident' to help him forward, knew the secret, in his day among those people, how to touch their hearts; and though, as explained, he is never now likely to attain high honours in State or Cabinet, he has, I believe, but to address a concourse of people on any subject, with which they are connected, and to command their enthusiastic sympathy."

"I had no idea Villars," said the Major, with a slight yawn, "that you were so well up in politics and their actors."

"As to the actors," laughed the young man, "I have known something of them in my short day; to my political creed I have not yet given utterance; but let us give all men their due."

"I always thought you more prone to literature and its leaders," pursued the elder.

"And there stands one of them;" replied Captain Villars, nodding his head, in a familiar manner, towards a gentleman who now joined the Duchess of Ayrton. "I suppose her little grace has been waiting all this time for a great favourite of her's;" he continued, "albeit he is the greatest satirist of our time and country, and most especially unsparing of the exclusive clique to which she belongs. And yet his darts strike the mark. So truly, that many folks, like poor Queen Bess, who lacked that peculiar sort of philosophy which Montaigne declares the best antidote to Woman's time and wrinkles—dash down the mirror that offends them. They think his books are 'd—d unpleasant;' but as Truth, though not always agreeable, must prevail, his reputation is world-wide, despite these growls from certain quarters. Once," he continued, laughing, "I knew an old bachelor, belonging to the same club as myself, and, 'though not a 'reading man,' he virtuously pursued his way (because he thought it was what he called the 'proper thing' to do so) up to a certain

number of a new serial publication by this author. But, then and there, coming upon his most worthy and inestimable self—he declined proceeding in such Siamese company a step further, and nothing would persuade him but that the writer had had what the newspapers call his ‘eye upon him,’ and intended a personal insult. A guilty conscience is always meeting its own fetch.”

Again, but only for a moment, the Major winced. The symptom, however, was unobserved by his companion, for he rattled on with,

“But this great writer is not happy in his portraiture of women. They turn into tame rabbits, or cunning foxes under his hands. Yet—ah—here comes one, though, who might teach him a better lesson. There—look—” and the young soldier raised his hat, as a lady approached the group assembled by the fountain; leading, rather than being escorted by, a venerable man.

“You see that man;” eagerly continued the Captain, “he is blind. But, wonderful to relate, none better enjoy the evidences of Art. He is an earnest seeker after the beautiful; he comprehends its philosophy, and appreciates it under whatever form presented. I have heard that he even suggests a picture; supplies an artist with subject matter, either from his intense intuition of an author’s happy

grouping, or from the wondrous imagination of which he is the tabernacle. It is, of course, a great pleasure to him to listen to an adequate explanation of the world and things around him. And, surely, none could do better justice to those things visible beneath this roof than his companion!"

"But who is she?" asked the Major, "I have seen nothing more worthy observation to-day."

"She is Beatrice Lester," was the reply.

A deadly pallor overspread the countenance of the strong man. This time, it could not be concealed from Captain Villars. Surprised and even alarmed,

"You are ill!" he exclaimed, "what can I do for you?"

But the Major put aside his hand. "It is nothing;" replied he, in a voice clear, but constrained, "I am subject to attacks like this. There—the spasm is but momentary—go on with what you were saying. Oh!" as if recollecting himself, "it was of that lady. What of her? Pray continue; your descriptions amuse me."

"I can only tell you," answered the young man, "that she is good, beautiful, clever, rich, and single."

"What a tribe of desirable adjectives!" ejaculated Major Percival, who appeared perfectly to have recovered, and even to be in better spirits than

before, "but what of her antecedents?" asked he.

"Oh! people have tried to make a mystery," answered Captain Villars, "where I dare say none exists. The only fact I know is, that an old uncle of her's, a very eccentric man, it is said, died some few years ago, leaving her in absolute and uncontrolled possession of a very large fortune."

"Unconditionally?" demanded the Major, with an appearance of unusual interest—"was there no heir?"

"None, that I ever heard of," was the reply, "and, besides, the property was not entailed. The title, however, one of our oldest Baronetcies, is thereby extinct."

"Is there any probability of her marrying?" was the next question.

"I think not;" replied the other, "of course, she has been besieged with offers, but to no one has she yet been known to accord any particular consideration."

"Is she very ambitious?"

"Not in a worldly point of view. Her great happiness seems to consist in doing deeds of unostentatious charity."

"Queer?" asked Major Percival, slightly tapping his forehead.

"Damn it," answered Captain Villars, laughing, although something grated unpleasantly on his ear; "the most rational and charming creature; and, though monstrously clever, not a shade of *blue* in any of her ways. See, how pleasantly she is talking to those around her! She is a great friend of the Duchess of Ayrton; almost always with her. But Beatrice Lester is fit for a queen!"

"You are enthusiastic, Villars;" was the cold response.

"And so are others beside myself," replied the young officer. "Why, look at what other women are. Sans beauty, how vain! sans taste!—how expensive!—sans talent—how pedantic! sans anything but selfishness—how obtrusive of kindness! sans rank—what stiff, stuffy exclusiveness!"

"Your opinion seems to have been formed in a bad school."

"Perhaps so;" was the ready admission, "but this Beatrice Lester has unconsciously elevated and reformed it, as regards her sex. With every advantage, she is the most unostentatious creature in London."

"But is she not guilty of politics?"

"Perhaps so;—although I should designate them more as sympathies. At all events, she is certainly of no party." Answered Captain Villars.

“Do you meet her often?”

“Not very; she only visits at the best houses, and I go everywhere.” And then, was added in the youthful, joyous tone of a pleasant recollection. “But the other night I came across her at a ball at S—— House. To see her standing there by the fountain, you would not believe how lovely she looked in her simple dress of white lace, with just a solitary crimson flower in her black hair! Well, of course, all the world was at her feet, the world—of which I was the outcast. Not daring to approach a managing mamma, nor to lift my eyes to anything like a beauty or an heiress. In fact, I suppose, I had no business to be there. A detrimental! a thorn! a scorpion! Oh! we younger sons know our position in the world, I promise you; and if we don’t keep in the approved attitude—woe be to us! Well, Miss Lester had scarcely danced at all, having almost systematically declined; but as she stood talking to some half dozen of the *élite* of the assembly, I passed, or, was passing; when, moving aside, and with a friendly nod of recognition, she positively made way for me, I don’t hardly know how, into her magic circle. Yes, I—the outcast! Fancy the astonishment of those who had cast me off! Some would have given a great deal for such an easy footing with the rich Miss Lester; and there was I, positively, the Honourable Charles Villars, who

had been the cause of dishonourable disturbance in the bosom of the matronage, laughing and talking with her, as if she had been my poor little sister at home. She marry, Percival? By all that's bad in London life, I don't know the man worthy of her!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Hyper-Criticism—A Dark Trial—The Younger Son—Down with the *Bonnet Rouge*—The “Scorpion”—Favour not Fitness.

“SOME see faults in a book much larger than the book itself, as Sancho Panza with his eyes blinded, beheld from his wooden horse the earth no larger than a grain of mustard seed, and the men and women on it as large as hazel nuts,” read, or repeated Mrs. Seymour, as she closed a new volume which had engaged her attention; and, turning towards Amy Lyle who was seated with her in Miss Lester’s morning-room. “And so it is,” she said, “with many people in their observation of the characters with which they come in contact; their virtues are written in sand, and their faults in brass. Others refuse to recognize excellence at all, but from that point of view which the back of their own hobby-horse commands; then, again, ‘many in look-

ing at a peacock's train, fix on every spot where the feathers are worn and the colours faded,' in preference to its view as a whole; but, for myself, I have no respect for hyper-criticism or exclusiveness. More dignified that earnest appreciation, that ready recognition which finds sermons in stones, and good in everything. You will think me partial, perhaps; but, Amy, I know not a better instance of how a bright and truthful nature finds its own reflection in persons, actions, books, and everything else almost, than in our dear Beatrice."

Amy slightly coloured; and after putting a few strokes to the drawing on which she was engaged, replied in a constrained tone:

"Yes, Miss Lester is indeed very good to everybody; but how blessed the lot in life which is bright enough to shed a light on the path of others!"

Mrs. Seymour slowly removed the gold spectacles which she had worn during the perusal of the new book; and after quietly restoring them to their case, looked fixedly on her youthful companion, as if trying to divine the cause of that 'but' which fell so coldly from the lips, from whence an enthusiastic response might well have been expected. The girl evidently flinched beneath the scrutiny, although her occupation was resolutely continued. At last, Mrs. Seymour said,

"Do you think, my child, that your friend's lot

has been an immunity from that suffering, which, in some form or other, is universal; especially, perhaps, the fate of the gifted, or those called forth to fulfil some great purpose?"

"I do not know—I cannot say—I have never heard the whole of Miss Lester's life," was the hesitating reply.

The embarrassment was evidently something very painful to the lady who witnessed it. For a moment, she seemed to hesitate; then, as if making up her mind as to the right or wrong of the reply—she said in a very serious tone:

"You think, perhaps, Amy Lyle, that the one you behold rich, followed, flattered, useful, has not been tried as you have been. Know then, that her earlier years were years of sorrow; and, for a time, barren of sympathy. And not only from without, did trouble come; but within, all was darkness and dismay.

"Her faith uncultured, she was left to the workings of an imagination singularly strong—inherited perhaps from her mother, who was an Italian; and this imagination having nothing to feed on but the gloom of her own lonely lot, brought with it a creed in which terror was the chief element.*

* For the probability of this state of mind in the young, I appeal to a recent tragedy on the Continent.

Instigated by an agency so fearful, and strange in one so tender and innocent, she was goaded on in her daily life to acts which, had she been older, might have been observed as eccentric. But there was no one near to note the symptoms; and she was left, for some wise purpose, no doubt, to struggle through this rugged vale, on which were cast the dark shadows of a spiritual death. At other times, youth and physical health, struggled through the unhallowed blackness, and then, to the few about her, she was as a vision of hope and joy; for indeed the love of the small household belonging to the castle was set upon the young creature who had grown up in its gloomy seclusion. But the spectre, of which none knew, returned. She read holy books, but they failed to exorcise it; their good seed might spring up in time, but, for a season, her religion, the world around her, and her own being, were involved in the fierce trial by which she was beset. At this period, her uncle summoned me to her home. I had known him many years before, and my acquaintance with his sad history prepared me for the dire change which its misery had inflicted on him; a change which no time on earth could soothe or cover. To Beatrice, I was, personally, a stranger. She rejoiced, however, at my coming, and, in this early spring-tide of her life, when the buds and blossoms are generally abundant, she attached herself

to me in a manner which few could understand who are surrounded by home ties, its duties, and sympathies. Soon, however, I discovered that something was strange in the dear child.

“She manifested all the signs of an extraordinary intellect, and the most perfect obedience which is not always its handmaid. But still, there was an excitement, an *impulse* about her; which led her at times to perform actions, trivial of course, but contradictory to the reasoning power which was beyond her years. At last—she confessed to me;—confessed, with tears wrung from a burning heart, and unsatisfied conscience—that all she did was unsatisfactory to her, all she thought on—blighted; by *superstition*—which she mistook for religion.

“I was shocked, but not surprised when I contemplated her long loneliness, her ardent imagination, and earnest nature, which had not been properly trained; but I was blessed in being the means of teaching her, that the impulse of which she was the slave, was the very reverse to the love and liberty of the Gospel. The task before her was incredibly difficult; perhaps, indeed, none could understand its arduous nature who have never known the strength of the fetters around her, nor been tried in the manner she had been; a manner so subtle that it is difficult to render tangible to those who have never known such bitter experience. I conjured her to resist the temp-

tation, even to do a right thing if impelled thereto by terror of the consequences if left undone. I implored her to test the prompting within her; even, if need be, to cease, for a time, that diligent scriptural search, and those long prayers by which, *because instigated by fear only*, her spirit was wearied. And, in time, out of the struggle, arose light in her heart, and strength to her mind.

“The resistance of an evil influence, brought its reward. Many were the secret conflicts, doubtless; many the stumbling stones. But at last—at last—the glorious liberty; the consciousness of a love, which required not these death-like ashes of a sacrifice, which had in it no recognition of mercy.

“In such conflict was strength gained. A renewed and glorious Hope sprung up; and Truth and Mercy kissed each other.

“In the meanwhile, an earnest desire to know herself, to comprehend the nature of this tremendous struggle between light and darkness, led her to the perusal of works with which few so young have gained any acquaintance. Philosophy was tried—and in vain; although, here and there, some echo, some flower, some feeble ray, for the humble Truth-seeker.

“The Bible, as expounded by the English branch of the Church Universal,—not its feverish and compulsory reading—but its divine love, can alone

reconcile the difficulties of such a case, and clear the path from its thorns and briars.

"But, with a happier state of feeling, came an ardent sympathy for Freedom. Not anarchy. No; the daily struggle, and the arguments with which Faith and Reason both combined against it, brought Order and its necessity to the life so unchanged still in all its outward seeming. But looking upon the past as the tyranny of an influence not good, Liberty and Religion advanced together.

"Then came terrible troubles from without—troubles, my dear young friend, which in intensity may bear comparison with your own. Of these, perhaps, you may hear another time. Under any of these exigencies, Miss Lester would willingly have sought your excellent father, but the privilege was beyond her reach."

"And yet she is so good a Churchwoman?" hazarded Amy.

"Yes. So you must not fancy," replied Mrs. Seymour, "that though never appearing in the Sanctuary during those long years of trouble, she was forgetful of her sacred privileges; or, that when once the order and beauty of the Church system were explained to her, she failed to appreciate her own baptismal inheritance, or to realize the comfort of the Communion to which she belongs. In fact, her mind, long harassed, felt the need of such a

haven. And here, perhaps, I may as well add, that the love of Freedom, the thirst for Spiritual Liberty, as the antidote of a peculiar temptation (which, if triumphant, might have ended in the utter alienation of that finely-strung mind), combined with the rest found in the Anglican Church—the *via media* between latitudinarianism and infallibility—to preserve her, later, from the power of Rome; the shelter beneath which so many people, tossed and troubled, have thought to find safety and peace.

“During her residence abroad, the position held by her mother’s family in Italy, and the notoriety of her wealth and genius, were more than sufficient to point her out as a peculiar prize to the body, whose wondrous power may be partly attributed to the elasticity, and seeming applicability, with which it welcomes every condition of rank and intellect.

“Thus, how many have thought to reach the goal! I have known the learned, the worldly, the sceptic, the young under the reaction of Calvinism, rush to the City which seems so goodly and tranquil a refuge. For a time, what cries of Peace within its walls! But—afterwards?”

Amy was about to reply. Her curiosity was excited, but still more a sense of shame at the consciousness of something dark and unholy within

her own breast, which prevented, even now, a clear appreciation of any trials to which Beatrice had been exposed. Perhaps Mrs. Seymour had not been so wise and intuitive as usual, in selecting the especial one of which she had spoken, wherewith to excite a sympathy she felt wanting. *It is difficult to address, successfully, anything but experience*; and as the lady knew this, I fancy it probable that she might have imagined the gloom and distraction, so long manifested by Amy, to proceed from some such inward ordeal as that to which she alluded. A heavy trial it was, indeed, under which the young girl was suffering—a horrid temptation—a hard struggle in her secret heart; but not, Mrs. Seymour, anything of the kind you just now said, and truly, was so difficult to render tangible to those who have not realized it in themselves.

Before Amy had time, however, to answer, or her companion to continue, the door opened, and Charles Villars was announced.

“I hope I do not intrude,” he said, looking towards Mrs. Seymour and her young friend, the one still holding the book, and the other busy at her easel. “I know this room is sacred to the Muses.”

“Oh! no, Charles; you are very welcome,” kindly answered Mrs. Seymour, with a genial glance towards his frank, handsome face.

"And may I be deemed worthy to join the conversation I fear I have disturbed?"

"At the moment you entered," said the aged lady (who, unlike most aged ladies, was a positive favourite with young Villars), "we were speaking of Romanism, and the wonderful appliances of its vast system."

"By the bye," he answered, "you and Miss Lester must have seen some manifestations a trifle less seductive than those which reach us here, during your residence in Italy? Some relatives of hers are sitting at the Pope's feet, are they not?"

"Yes; she has relations and friends, also, living in Rome," was the reply; "but they are among those most impatient of the yoke of the foreigner and oppressor."

"An impatience in which Miss Lester shares?"

"Or, rather, a cause which moves her deeply," said Mrs. Seymour. "As to mere 'impatience,' she fears its result, dreading anything like a Red-Republicanism which, as in France during the last century, can only defeat the pure aim of real Liberty; but, while awaiting the time and measures which shall bring about the social and political redemption of a country partly her own, you may imagine how one of her disposition writhes at the vision of injustice, intolerance, ignorance, and complete despotism."

"And do not Poland and Hungary come in for a share of her sympathies?"

"Undoubtedly. But she believes that England will some day help to strike off their fetters; thus, crowning her goodness and generosity, which have so long provided a home for the exile, and a refuge for the oppressed."

"But still," returned Captain Villars, "the refugees have sometimes made but a sorry use of her protection."

"You mean, I suppose, by their abusing the privileges offered in this island of ours, in proclaiming from thence the doctrines which are alien to the flag flying over them; thus implicating the Constitution which permits the echo of revolutionary and seditious language. But this, you must perceive, is an inevitable evil, although one not difficult of remedy."

"As long as it is not inferred that England is willing to bedabble her hands in such blood-red quarrels."

"But the quarrels need not be blood-red," said Mrs. Seymour, "although the partisans have been goaded on by a deadly animosity. The very intensity of the feelings roused in the hearts of those immediately concerned, proves the necessity of a mediator. Where can you find an umpire but in England? What an honourable distinction

among the nations ! Others have forfeited the distinction ; but, England, with all her faults and all her misery, still calm, liberal, enlightened, and progressive, may best adjudge the means and lead the way of liberty, . order, and a civilized happiness through Europe."

"But will her love of justice be strong enough to induce her to bear the brunt, where self-interest may stand in the way ?"

"I hope so. We may test this problem of History even in our own day. Looking to the end, (and, turning to the annals of other countries, behold the speed of Time and its acts!) she would thereby, probably, secure her own salvation. National policy, and human sympathies, ought never to be short-sighted. Woe, if they lead us, as was led the prophet of old, into a path, a vineyard path, but with a 'wall on each side.' If attempting to proceed, the foot may first be crushed ; and then the narrow place, with no turning ; where, if refusing to recognize the Angel, even the mouth of the dumb may be opened to remonstrate. And then, the naked sword, drawn and gleaming, in the hand that would have stayed us." After a moment's pause, she continued. "We cannot, in the meanwhile, wonder at the vehement outcry of the oppressed. We may regret the tones which, falling on the heart of the south, have power to stir and create, of which those

in a cooler clime can have no idea; (let this facility, this hot-bed readiness be a warning and a hope) but even among individuals in any land, what would be the feeling, if unjustly trampled on, torn from home, deprived even of its ministering affections; forbidden to exercise the powers which Heaven has granted; thrown, for no cause, into prison, and left to perish and starve in its cold walls? Even those to whom Patriotism is but a name, would rebel against any one of these tyrannous influences; from pain, for love of wife and child; by the power of Reason, and by all held dear to man, the sharp anguish would make itself heard. But would others sympathize? Would they pause in their pleasant way to wipe the tears, and dress the wounds? Do they, in the cases which every day life brings forth? One weeps, another smiles. And so in the shriek for Freedom! But remember, that the Father-land alone, without any of its universal, thousand links and spells, the Father-land alone is dear, inexpressibly, to the Hungarian, the Pole, and the sons of Italy. Of the latter, it can no longer be said that they are 'as pilgrims resting on the ruins of the past;' they are up and watching. Keen suffering has broken the trance."

Beatrice entered, and greeted Captain Villars, who seemed, indeed, something of a favourite at her house.

"But, Miss Lester," he said, "I ought not to have come alone this morning. A friend of mine is very anxious for an introduction to you. He saw you at the Crystal Palace yesterday."

"Indeed!" she smilingly exclaimed, "may I ask his name?"

"Major Percival; did you observe him standing with me near the fountain? Very tall and very handsome."

"But not, it seems, attractive to me, for I did not notice him. Who is he? The name is not familiar."

"Well, he has just returned from India: well chronicled by Lord Dalhousie. He is brave and clear-headed; qualities always valuable, and especially observable out there. As to his family, I can't quite make him out. One of my acquaintances, Spenser of ours, who has taken a great liking to him, tried to roost him on a branch of some well-known genealogical tree, but, though Spenser won't confess it, I'm confident the Major tumbled down from the perch. But from what I have heard, he fought his way into Oriental notice under the auspices of some native Prince, one of our dusky, but desirable allies."

"How long has he been in England?" asked Mrs Seymour.

"Only two months. He knows nothing and
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nobody. But he is vastly agreeable when he chooses, and a very capital specimen, altogether, of an Indian officer."

"I like those Anglo-Indians," said Beatrice.

"And so do I; but this one, despite his ignorance of our folks and fallacies, has a great deal of worldly *savoir faire*. Proof. He is already successful, through Spenser's elder brother and his wife, in getting an introduction to the Duchess of Ayrton—but I warn you, Miss Lester, it is but as a step in your direction."

Beatrice laughed. "Well," she said, "it will give me an opportunity of hearing a few things I want to know as to Indian rule and native claims. Macaulay has inoculated many with this sort of curiosity, by his sayings and writings."

"Ah! but the Major, methinks, fights a little shy of the subject."

"But not of Lord Dalhousie, I hope?" asked Mrs. Seymour, "that would be a personal grievance to me."

"Well, I don't know, and, therefore, cannot care so much about his Lordship as yourself, so have never tried for much information; but, the fact is, Percival is generally taciturn."

"I am afraid, Captain Villars," said Miss Lester, playfully, "that, after all, you are not too fond of your friend?"

"I confess he is a little odd to my experience—cuts one short you know, though never transgresses our sort of etiquette. But, at all events, he plays high, and knows how to win, or lose like a thorough gentleman—without a smile or a wince."

"What a recommendation!" ejaculated Beatrice, and then added, rather seriously, "but I hope you are never either his partner or antagonist?"

"No—no, not I. What should a wretched younger son, with a short allowance, and small pay, do at such a game as that?"

"One advantage, at all events, in your position, if it hold you back from the gaming-table."

"A fig for a necessitous restriction;" was Captain Villars' reply; "where principle does not lead the way, we cannot much respect a policy. Yet the fate of a younger son, though sometimes debarring him from this particular vice, only too often urges him on to debt and distraction under a different form. It is all very easy to say 'keep within your allowance,' but when everything around us is a temptation to an anti-hermit life, how the d— (I beg your pardon, Miss Lester) can a fellow be expected to brave the laughter of his companions, and an excommunication from the set to which he belongs? The present only belongs to a 'scorpion.' For him there is no vision of a domestic future, such as poets, who alone know how to convert thin air

into every-day substantial essentials, talk about. We cannot marry."

Amy Lyle looked up from her easel with such surprise, that Captain Villars laughed, and Beatrice paused in something she was about to say.

"I assure you it is quite true, Miss Lyle," continued the young man, turning for a moment towards her. "We are too often but thorns in the sides of our parents, the terror of relations and friends, the foot-balls of chance or patronage, and the satellites of a noble elder brother. From the nursery we are made to feel this. I assure you, Mrs. Prim, our nurse when children, was as staunch an upholder of the rights of Primogeniture (I hope I have not unconsciously perpetrated a pun ?) as any legislator of the United Kingdom. And so on, through tutors and youthful governors, the brothers are well taught their respective lessons, I can tell you; the one to rule, and the other to obey. It is, therefore, of course, the bounden duty of the younger to fall down, in after-life, before the family Dagon he has been bred to worship. The sisters may be tolerably provided for; but the worship prescribed for the boys is a cringing idolatry, because that is the religion which pays.

"And the mischief of idleness is even worse," interposed Beatrice.

"But most deplorable of all, you will agree, Miss

Lester, the necessity which compels a man, with or without what the Low Church folks would designate 'a call' to become a parson; or a coward to turn soldier; or the brainless to adopt diplomacy. Because, forsooth, there happens in the family, to be a rich living in one corner, interest at the War-office in another direction, or an opening for official honours in another."

"Yet I trust and think," said Mrs. Seymour, "that we are on the eve of a great reform in civil and military administration; and that, before many years are passed, Merit will rise triumphant over Patronage and its evils."

"But in the meanwhile, what suffering, what heart-burning, the injustice of favour causes!" replied Beatrice. "I know a widow in very humble circumstances, who has, for many a lonely year, deprived herself of the comforts, almost the necessities of life, that she might educate an only son, in the hope of qualifying him, thereby, for some appointment in the public office, of which his father had been, for many years, a faithful subordinate. The youth has done ample justice to his excellent training—but all the talent in the world would be of no avail to obtain him that to which his poor mother had so fondly and confidently looked forward. Every place is filled up: often even before proclaimed as vacant. There is no arena for merit. Patronage and self-interest

rule. Private feeling is antagonistic, just now, to public justice. But, cordially concurring with your hopeful opinion, dear mother, I look forward to the time when the right man may have a chance for the right place."

Thus, unconsciously, but prophetically, were uttered the words which, under a more universal pressure of the same feeling, and amid a national lamentation that evil had been so suffered to abound, have become a popular war-cry; when even a noble lord, has proclaimed among his peers, that "Fitness, not Favour," is what we want.

The question here is, how far a better state of things is being brought about by the co-operative agency of some few with whom class and ample possession might have militated against a more liberal policy?

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Middle Class—The Boarding House—Magnates—Courtiers.

"BUT," said Captain Villars, "this is a digression from the assertion which so much surprised Miss Lyle, that cadetship and matrimony are incompatible."

The fair but silent girl was still bending over her drawing; perhaps her thoughts were far from England; or if listening to its need of Administrative Reform, the tale might but render the necessity of Eustace Neville's absence more clear to her understanding. It is quite true that every subject, every impression, every hope or fear were centred in him. Challenged, however, by the young officer, whose frank good-nature, and politeness, were intuitive in his behaviour towards one, "not quite of *ourselves*," she relinquished her pencil, and looking very pretty, and very innocent, quietly said :

"I suppose you mean that a narrow income, and no possibility of enlarging it, would forbid the thought of inflicting privation on any one beloved?"

"Exactly so;" he answered, pleased to have roused her, even for a moment, from evident depression; then, turning again to Mrs. Seymour, he said, laughing, "but do you know, Madam, there is one glorious chance open for us? The servility of the wealthy middle class to anything with the fragrance of Olympus clinging about it—never mind what twig or offshoot, what nipped bud or dry leaf—would grant even a wife to a poor detrimental."

"Well, well," answered Mrs. Seymour, smiling, "and such marriages are not, sometimes, without a good social result."

"But the servility," exclaimed Beatrice, with indignation, "is deplorable. Talk of reform and justice! How can the one be perfect, and the other pure, when the servility to rank is so extreme among those of a lower degree! It is secondary, only, to that worship of the golden calf of which we have seen such lamentable examples in the highest of the land. Money and servility are the banes of London society!"

"Bravo, Miss Lester!" exclaimed Captain Villars, looking, however, with real admiration at her flashing eye, and rosy lip, on which, for the first time, my dear reader may see an expression of scorn. "Bravo.

You gave a double thrust there. But I would suggest a word, not to be breathed to the ears polite of Baker Street and Tyburnia, because those ears are more fastidious, often, than the auricular organs of Belgravia—*Flunkeyism*. Now, is not that more expressive than *Servility*?"

"If you like to use it;" answered Beatrice, smiling, "but seriously, it is a great evil, call it by what name you will: and will help materially to clog the wheels of any great movement in the right direction. And then," she continued, turning towards Mrs. Seymour, "think, dearest Madre, of the frightful extent of an evil example, if only stamped with a high name!"

"I believe," answered the elder lady, "it is a real evil, much to be deplored, this cringing imitation of the aristocracy—especially among young men. And pray remember this, Captain Villars," she went on, addressing herself, but only half playfully, to her young friend, "I have known you from a boy, from the day when the notable Mrs. Prim tied your sash, and combed your hair; and my loving memory not interfering with my conviction that you are not altogether a contrast to hundreds of other idle young men, I do say, though not expecting you exactly to turn Mentor, that you ought to pause before you give any cause for scandal to—"

"Be re-echoed by my imitative acquaintance in

the said Baker Street, Tyburnia, or other neighbourhoods," he interposed. "For their sakes—yes;" he added, "but oh! Mrs. Seymour, if you only knew the salutary influence of the reflecting glass! How, beneath different rays, the features become distorted, and magnified! Fancy one's likeness in caricature!"

"But surely there must be many exceptions," said Amy Lyle, "to this base servility? I have always heard the middle class of England proclaimed her strength."

"And so it is," replied Captain Villars, "if it would only maintain its independence. I, running to and fro these much talked-of *classes*, know something of the evils of all. My lordly brother is horrified at the facts foreign to his exclusive experience, with which, in a mischievous moment, I have sometimes ventured to regale him. But even you, Miss Lester, with all your knowledge of social evils, cannot be so 'posted up,' as the Yankees would say, on some points as I am!"

"Indisputably not," answered Beatrice, merrily.

"I mean," he continued, "that your position may permit, either personally, or through chosen agents—an intercourse with the poor; but it shuts you out from the houses where you would be paraded as a lioness."

"I cannot express my regret at such a fate," she

replied, evidently much amused, "although I doubt not that in those very houses might be found many things and people truly desirable, if possessing your chance of looking for them."

"Oh—yes—that is very true, Miss Lester; I do assure you that I have met there much talent, beauty, and refinement—especially among the daughters. I have seen some who would be an ornament to any circle; even to our ball the other night at S—— House; (where, if truth be told, an exchange might have been made for the better;) but it is of the *flunkeyism* of the majority I complain as unendurable; a recent instance occurs to me at this moment—but—bear with me, dear ladies—it was at a Cheltenham Boarding House."

"May we hear it?" asked Mrs Seymour.

"Oh, certainly!" replied the young Captain. "You must know, then, that this Boarding House, though foreign, perhaps, even in name to your familiars, is very popular among the respectable middle class of which we were just speaking; and as hotel-bills are too high, and lodgings too lonely for a poor fellow with a conscience not unscathed like myself, I also avail myself of it, when recommended to drink the waters of Lethe. Well; the usual inhabitants of this house are some invalid old ladies; and some unprotected females, whose age is a problem; but whose occupations, cards, scandal, and the toilette;

two or three half-pay officers ; (looked upon as perfect heroes by the aforesaid fair ones :) a suspicious sprinkle of foreign titles ; and, perhaps, one or two younger ladies who are sure to be cruelly torn to pieces by the elder maidens ; and, if reputed rich, to be adored by the counts and barons ; to say nothing of an impression possible on the veterans' hearts long unused to beat at war's alarms. These are the standards. But, in the rush and roar of the Cheltenham season there is a goodly influx from Tyburnia down to the waves of Bloomsbury. 'They come—they come,' is the excited cry of the inhabitants of *the* house (observe it as always *the* house *par excellence*) by every train and road. And then, among the treasures cast up by the tide, is, not unfrequently, a positive live limb of the English aristocracy ! So, when I was last there, at the *proper* time o' the year, of course—I encountered the Honourable Mrs. M——, mother of the Countess of J——."

"What ! That cross-grained woman, with whom Lady J——, her daughter, was so miserable before marriage ?" exclaimed Mrs. Seymour. "Oh ! I well remember her years ago," she added, "and how her temper and worldliness hurried her daughter into a marriage with a man old enough to be her father ; the consequences of which marriage are too well known to need re-capitulation."

"Aye—the same," said Captain Villars, "but Mrs. Seymour, your acquaintance never revealed Mrs. M——, in all her glory. Its manifestations have been reserved for me."

"Why—how?"

"Although curious and cross—she is the centre of a Cheltenham crowd of adorers. Her costume, though very queer, is pronounced piquant and original—a fashion suitable to her individuality. Her temper is construed as wit. Her scandal—a sparkling satire. Rude, unkind, and overbearing in the extreme to those about her, she is not only tolerated, but flattered by the majority. Encouraged by this—she proceeds to the most ludicrous extremes—even to the assertion of her '*precedence*' in the order of march to and from the dining-room; almost knocking down, in her vehement zeal for this aristocratic privilege, a poor dear old paralytic woman who, as the widow of some foreign Baron, had hitherto—supported by a crutch and dignified consciousness—led the way. No one among the respectabilities present dare move from the table until *she* rises; nor propose cards, music, nor any other amusement, until *she* approves. Her eye-glass *runs down* any modest new-comer; and her audible inquiry of '*who* is it?' successfully abashes a merit not linked with blood.

"And then; her stories of 'my daughter the coun-

tess,' and my 'son-in-law the earl.' Ye powers of London ! what feats that worthy couple are made to perform !"

"But I do not think they are on terms of intimacy—I never meet her at their house;" innocently said Beatrice.

"Oh ! *ce n'est rien*," answered the Captain, "the anecdotes are just as authentic to an audience eager to retail them."

"But—how horrid all this is !" was Miss Lester's exclamation. With all her genius and experience, it was evident that these revelations or minutæ were fresh to her.

"And Mrs. M——," he continued, "having once been a beauty and an Amazon, is willing still to receive the dues of Venus and Diana. There are plenty to tell her that she is still lovely and courageous—anything she desires to be—or seem to be."

Beatrice moved across the room, and spoke kindly to Amy of her drawing, or some irrelevant subject. The conversation was not altogether pleasing to a person so sincere and simple ; but not observing this, Captain Villars thus continued,

"And the ingratitude of such idols towards the people who cringe to them, I know a recently painful proof of this. I was on a visit, for a few days, with Mr. E——, of H——, in Sussex—a

well-known country gentleman, but one who does not often make his appearance in London. There was a cricket-match; and not knowing what better to do with ourselves between luncheon and dinner, we strolled down to look at the players. After a time, as we were standing talking, and discussing the probabilities for and against the winners, a gentleman, (not an inhabitant of the place nor a player) advanced towards us, and took off his hat to Mr. E——. That local notability stared at the stranger; and then, muttering something not audible, even if complimentary, slightly inclined his head, and afterwards looked adrift, as if quite unconscious that any person had claimed a moment's attention. The gentleman stood for a moment, as if irresolute; then coloured visibly; and walked away.

“‘Do you know him?’ I asked of Mr. E——, and he answered ‘yes.’ Then perceiving, I suppose, my look of astonishment (for I was certain my friend, the Squire, was innocent of duns, and the nuisances which might have explained the case had it appertained to any man of ours) ‘he is a person from London,’ he said ‘at whose house my son has lately been received.’

“‘How?’ I asked ‘is he, then, an hotel-keeper?’

“‘Oh dear no,’ was Mr. E——’s reply, ‘he is a merchant; and my son tells me that he comes

down here occasionally to see his father, who would be in positive indigence but for his support.'

"I was still more surprised; but, determined to hear the whole, I asked him how long his son had stayed beneath the merchant's roof.

"'For three or four days!' was the answer, 'he was not well at the time—in fact had gone to town for medical advice—and they took better care of him than he would have done of himself if left to his Club and hotel.'

"'But is this merchant respectable?' said I, 'do you know anything against his character, or that of his family?'

"'Oh no!' he replied with a yawn, as if my curiosity bored him. 'On the contrary; I think my son told me that he had a very well appointed house, and that his wife was a sensible, kind, person.'

"'Then why Mr. E——,' I asked, not staying to heed this anti-arab ideal of respectability, 'then why did you not welcome him just now?' The Squire looked at me as if I were mad. He almost recoiled from my side.

"'Why?' he repeated. 'How can you ask such a question?' then, laughing at the very idea, he added, 'Welcome a tradesman! shake hands with old F——'s son! why—I have known his father all my life.'

"And so—because he had known a worthy man's father all his life, Squire E—— permitted his son to eat the merchant's bread, to rest beneath his roof, to sit beside his hearth, to receive every kindness, that a respectable goodwill could prompt towards the young rake, from himself and his amiable wife, and then, refusing to carry his infinite condescension, his sublime affability, any further, —he quietly turns his back upon him, and refuses, almost the common recognition, demanded by the simplest courtesy."

"Absurd and incredible!" said Beatrice.

"But strictly true;" replied Captain Villars.

"Not more so, however, than another *real* anecdote I am going to tell you," interposed Mrs. Seymour, in a cheerful tone, "which may be accepted as a balance to that thorough-going gossip, Charlie Villars', wretched experience. Some few years since, I, too, was visiting in a pleasant place twenty miles from London. Although not so very far from the metropolis, the locality was (and is, if railroads have not rendered it quite suburban) extremely retired. The inhabitants, too, retained the characteristics of country people generally; their virtues and prejudices. Of the latter, I observed none so painful as the petty distinctions among themselves. This one would not visit that, because he was, or had been engaged in commerce. Another

was regarded coldly, because he had lately farmed his own land, and received the profits, direct, into his pocket. Then there was antagonism between these little gentry, and the professional men; one lady, too, was looked upon very unlovingly (for they did not know her good descent, nor suspect her husband's heirship to a title) because she was less careful of her household arrangements, and had not, perhaps, so many servants as these patterns of precision required as orthodox. It was all very ridiculous; perhaps, 'painfully so' as my dear Beatrice"—with a smile towards her—"would say, if inclined to use her favourite paradox. Well; my visit over, I left the neighbourhood, with an unpleasant recollection of its petty feuds. But, after a time, circumstances induced me to return to it. Imagine my pleasure and astonishment, to find *harmony*!—how could it been achieved? By what good agency had the small jealousies, and still smaller distinctions, been soothed and amalgamated?—Why, a new family had entered the parish; a family, in rank and every social claim, towering far above the magnates of the vicinity; and by these strangers, equality was effected. Willing to be friendly with those around them, they opened their doors to all. The absurd local distinctions were much too minute for their comprehension; and it was, therefore, indispensable that they should

be discarded from the heads and hearts of those who were invited, so frankly, to meet each other in the abode of this real aristocracy.

“ When it was found that the Honourable Mrs. —, the daughter-in-law of a countess, the familiar of majesty, and the wife of a soldier and a courtier, was perfectly indifferent to the *ménage* of her neighbours, or their calling; when it was seen how she went about, at times, in negligent costume, driving with her husband, or children, in a most unassuming equipage—it began to be suspected that, after all, there had been some mistake in the indigenous ideal of society, dress, and manner. And when, to crown all, a relative of this family arrived—a marquis and ambassador—and, during his visit, invitations were received to a dinner-party, many were the unexpressed conjectures as to whether this person or that might be deemed fit to meet him. The day came; and behold! the local inequalities were for ever made even! There were the different representatives of the late village politics and their puerilities. Nothing could be wanted, henceforth, to perfect this small social system. An agreeable, affable marquis on one side the hospitable board, and a good old man, who lived in a very unassuming way, in an exceedingly small house in the vicinity, on the other. Any of the intermediates, or some of them, I do assure you, would have

hesitated to ask that impoverished, white-haired old gentleman to dinner. And, of course, there was an *abandon* about the entertainment which might not have been approved, if exhibited for the first time, elsewhere, among those orthodox people."

"Did the mediators remain long in that neighbourhood?" asked Captain Villars. "I think I can guess their name."

"Then you may be sure of it," answered Mrs. Seymour, "when I tell you that they were removed, by her Majesty's good pleasure, to the inner circle of her Court. It is very pleasant to reflect," she added, "that people so excellent as these undoubtedly are, should be among those whom 'the queen delighteth to honour.' But, subsequently to the high appointments which removed their residence to the immediate vicinity of royalty, these amiable folks returned, in the most unostentatious way, to visit their former neighbours—a very good proof that *they* had found much to love and respect in those among whom they had been located."

"And so, after all," said Captain Villars, "you need not, Miss Lester, be disgusted with the class to which we belong."

And, apologizing for a most unconscionably long visit, he departed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

• The Improvisatrice—Humility—Foreign Letters—The Madre and the Duchess—Jealousy—Victory.

AND when he had gone, Mrs. Seymour left the room, and Beatrice sat down to her harp. Perhaps music was more in unison with her own thoughts than the rattling chat of Charlie Villars. At all events, she knew that it had power to soothe and cheer Amy Lyle, having often tried its effect on her, to more purpose than achieved by any other means suggested by her constant care, and forbearing love towards the orphan girl. But I must tell you that Beatrice was a great musician ; not by the force of hard labour, of a finished execution of the most intricate passages, but by the power of the soul within her. This wondrous power, linking her with higher and better spheres, she might have inherited from her Italian mother, with her ardent

imagination, and a poetry which rendered even a finished improvisation of words or sweet strains easy to her. This rare gift she seldom exhibited before any but those nearest and dearest to her; indeed, the atmosphere of London drawing-rooms might not be favourable to its manifestations; but Amy Lyle had long known its magic, even over the dark, brooding thoughts which clouded her own happiness, and stood in the way of the love which fain would overshadow, and keep her from every possible evil.

And Beatrice sang. At first, her song was fitful—almost mournful; but presently, sweeping her hand over the chords of her favourite instrument, she seemed to enter a new and glorious path; and her energy, her hope, her wide sympathies breathed in the music, and inspired the words which accompanied them. At length she paused; and her companion, with a delight seldom evinced, inquired the name of a composition so strange, but wondrous in its influence.

“Name!” replied Beatrice, “I really have not thought of it. A mere musical allegory;” and, advancing towards Miss Lyle, and placing her arm round her waist, she looked too touching, young, and simple for so great an improvisatrice, except for a certain expression which told the strength of some victory over herself.

"But I am so pleased, dear Amy," she said, in a very quiet voice, "that I possess one faculty of cheering you; especially, as this morning I fancy you more than usually sad."

"Do I appear so?" replied Amy, with a trembling lip. "Oh, Miss Lester! What can I ever do to repay your kind watchfulness of one so unworthy as I am?"

And the young girl, at that moment, was quite sincere. The evil was exorcised, and she felt, looking into the heart usually blighted by its presence, her deep ingratitude; but little dreamed of the compunction and perplexity which agitated the friend by her side.

"I have been fearing, dear child," replied Beatrice, "that I may have proved too exacting. I did it for the best; but, perhaps, I was wrong in urging you to quit the retirement you love so well, to mingle in other scenes to which your weary spirit could utter no response. Dr. F—— told me, however, that society would be a good remedy; otherwise, believe me, dear Amy, I would not have insisted on your so often appearing in it."

This apology from her! Such kindness and humility were dreadful to the poor conscience-stricken girl. It made her, for the moment, feel like some guilty thing afraid to face the light.

Tears sprang to her eyes; and, almost shrinking away from the side of her benefactress, she said—but her utterance was broken—

“Oh! you have done everything for me—for the best. I know it—I know it; you have clothed me, fed me, taught me—but taught me, most of all, to know how undeserving, weak, and what a wretched thing I am.”

“My dearest Amy!” cried Beatrice, and then she stopped,—as if some words she fain would utter died upon her lips. At last she said, “You are not yet strong. When health and mental elasticity return, you will see how dreadfully you over-rate any inefficient deed of mine.” And then she drew her more closely towards her, as if to shield her from some threatening evil.

And Amy struggled not from the fond, sisterly embrace. Her tears fell on the bosom which beat in unison with others’ joy or sorrow, and especially, as it seemed, in sympathy most acute with her. They were quite alone, and the helpless girl felt almost urged by this gentleness to confess—to pour out the secret of her intense misery, and to implore pardon for the base suspicion it had suggested. She clung to Beatrice as she never had done before, since her sickness. Indeed, had Miss Lester thought more of herself, she would have perceived how, since that illness,

and her own unremitting attention night and day, some mysterious barrier was thrown up in her intercourse with her *protégée*. But, though not precisely observing the frequent lack of affection's deeds and language—because her nature was the reverse of exacting—she was, and had long been, painfully conscious of a want of success—a void—a something unfulfilled, in the hope which had been so abounding, so loving, but so fatally mistaken towards another.

This moment was, therefore, pleasurable to Beatrice, though painful, as speaking of a grief yet unconquered. She hoped it might prove a new era in the life she had so desired to guard: that its confidence would help her to assist this otherwise friendless creature; and bright drops of sympathy fell from the eyes so full of pity on the fair, curling head which, thus unusually, found a shelter in the arms ever ready to receive.

“Yes—I will tell her—I will show her what I am,” was Amy's thought; but the struggle between right and wrong! Then light seemed about to conquer the darkness; the forlorn, excited girl thought of the dead, and their sympathy with goodness; and she shrunk from herself as she knew she had been lately. “Ah! the fear of distance from them decides me—I will strive to do this right

thing;" and her thoughts took some such shape as—

" Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread."

" Ah! yes—yes!" was the agonizing mental colloquy. "At least, my conscience shall be clear; whether my conviction be true or false that *he* loves her.... whether my life be hopeless, blighted—at least I will that 'the dead shall look me through and through;' I will not have in my heart towards the living that which I dread the dead to find there. But, oh! 'There must be wisdom with great Death!'"

She never thought that what she desired to say might be an insult to Beatrice; her reverence for Eustace Neville absorbed all conventional distinctions of rank and wealth. His love was the greatest honour earth could bestow, in her estimation, even on one so beautiful and gifted as this lady. But before she could speak, before her bewildered thoughts could frame the words, or her painful purpose, though clear, could shape its course, the door opened, and Mrs. Seymour entered.

Instinctively, Amy sprang from the embrace of Beatrice; the traces of tears were on both their

faces; but Amy's cheek was flushed with great excitement; she looked startled—confused; as if her secret had been suddenly discovered. Then came a quick sense of relief; no—no; it had not escaped her.

But none can describe the mingled feelings of Beatrice. Remorseful, though guiltless;—fearful of betraying her suspicion that Amy loved,—and perplexed whether that love was returned or not. Holding Amy's hand yet within her own, she said, turning to Mrs. Seymour:

"I fear, Madre, that she is still more suffering than she says. How think you? Would a change of air and scene be beneficial to our friend?" And she looked with a wistful tenderness from one to the other of her companions.

"Not so much so," answered Mrs. Seymour, "as something I hold now in my hand—a letter from Australia for Miss Lyle." And, with a smile, she playfully held up a square far-travelled looking missive to their view.

The hand which Beatrice held turned cold as death beneath her touch; it trembled violently. She suddenly looked round, and beheld her charge, standing as if transfixed, perfectly pale, but though silent for the instant, vivid with some strange gleam of intelligence in her generally meek blue eyes.

"Give it to me," said Amy, in a voice even more

composed than that in which she had spoken before Mrs. Seymour's entrance, although there was a hollowness in the tone. "Give it to me," and involuntarily she clasped the hand which Beatrice released to her heart.

"Here it is," said Miss Lester, with emotion; "oh, dear Amy, I can easily understand your anxiety in receiving this first intelligence of your brother-friend in his New World; and so we will leave you alone with it." And motioning to Mrs. Seymour to follow her, she quitted the room, although a little apprehension concerning Amy was at war with the delicacy of thus leaving her free from observation.

"I fear, Madre," she said, when they were beyond hearing, "I fear she is even too patient; her silence not permitting us always to guess her misery of mind and body; but still I trust we have left her with the best restorative. Think, mother, of what they, so tried together, must be to each other!"

Mrs. Seymour was silent. Perhaps she was thinking more of the extreme pallor of Beatrice; and the affection, seemingly unreturned, she had lavished on this girl. Moving on together, they entered the library. What richly stored shelves were there! Miss Lester was just about choosing some favourite companion from the well-arranged rows of many competitors for her favour.

"Ah, mother, if the living incarnations of wisdom,

wit, and knowledge would only stand calmly in each other's company as these do, what a glorious harmony would rise in the world around us. Looking back upon these great ones who, though dead, yet speak through endless generations—how perfect the unity of the true! Unsuspected, doubted contemporaneously, but now to us (free from the dust of their vain and imaginary conflict) how evident and sublime is that unity! Alas! how often when the life-blood runs warm, when there is still time, does self-love thrust itself in the way, preventing the honest, cordial grasp of a brother's hand! Truth is one—indivisible, indestructible; but blinded by party prejudice, or giddy with self-exaltation, her disciples pause not to behold the grand and fearless repose of her attitude; nor to meditate on her uplifted look towards an Eternal haven."

But before any answer could be made, the Duchess of Ayrton was announced.

"Well, Beatrice, here have I found you, caught you in the very act—musing and moralizing as usual."

Then warmly returning Mrs. Seymour's greeting. "And do you know," said she to that lady, "I am afraid her bad example is contagious? Why, only yesterday, in face of the Crystal Palace I found myself strangely filled with all sorts of quaint quotations from Chancer, and I do not know whom beside.

Verily, she stirs up the depths of one's memory, and finds treasures there, unsuspected by their owner and not often wanted in the common haunts of men, and Mayfair women."

"But your memory, my dear Duchess, was always excellent," answered Mrs. Seymour.

"And who dropped anything worth keeping into it but yourself?" was the reply. "I must not call you 'madre'," she continued with a pretty playfulness, "because it might create jealousy in the heart which lays claim to you so entirely; but remember that you owned me as your charge before that began to beat to this life's tune. Heigho! how old I must be getting."

To explain this, I may as well tell my reader that, in former days, Mrs. Seymour had acted as *gouvernante* to some of the daughters of the nobility. Her own tale, if she can find an opportunity to tell it will shew how this was; but at present, I have only a kind look and caress to record, as her lively Grace resumed:

"But, Beatrice, will you leave those musty-looking books, and drive with me this lovely day? You look very ill."

Miss Lester declared, with regret, that it was impossible. She remembered Amy upstairs, and wondered at the length of time before she made her appearance. Just, however, as she was framing

an excuse to her Grace's reiterated entreaty, the Duchess said :

"But I hope Miss Lyle is better to-day? And, by the bye, what was she doing alone yesterday morning at Ackermann's in the Strand?"

"Amy alone in the Strand!" exclaimed Beatrice, with astonishment. "Yesterday!—oh! you must be mistaken"

"Nay—but I am not;" answered the Duchess. "My daughter, Mary, saw her there, and bowed. The recognition was returned."

"Surely, Lady Mary must have confused her with somebody else;" said Mrs. Seymour; "a stranger who resembled Miss Lyle might have acknowledged the salutation."

"No, no;" persisted the little Duchess. "It was your Amy Lyle; you know that Mary has taken quite a fancy to your protégée, Beatrice; and, when seeing her, as I tell you, she was about to offer to drive her home. But as Miss Lyle seemed anxious to avoid observation, by passing on quickly to the other end of the shop, my daughter could do nothing but step into the carriage which, with her governess, was waiting for her, and leave her to her fate."

"This is quite unaccountable;" said Miss Lester. "At what hour did it happen?"

"About the time that we were in Hyde Park."

"Did you know," turning to Mrs. Seymour, "of Amy leaving home, and on foot?"

"I had gone, if you recollect, my dear child, to call on Captain Villars' new sister-in-law."

"Ah, true, Madre. I had forgotten. But what possibly could be the inducement for one so extremely timid and utterly unaccustomed to be alone in the public streets, to find her way, unattended, to such a place as that? Were it merely to purchase drawing materials, or anything of that sort, of course she could have had the carriage, as usual, on those occasions."

"Well, my dear Beatrice," said the Duchess, "as I cannot enlighten you further, I must say farewell. I suppose we shall meet in Belgrave Square to-night?"

And after receiving an answer in the affirmative, although evidently from a half absent mind, her Grace vanished. After musing on what she had heard for some minutes, Miss Lester exclaimed :

"But, Madre, it is not generous thus to marvel and meditate on the deeds of the absent; far better, when possible, as in this case, to give them the opportunity of an easy explanation." And she rose to seek the orphan girl of whom she had constituted herself the guardian.

Returning to the boudoir where she had left her with the letter, Beatrice found Amy still there. She was seated on an ottoman with her back to the door,

but no symptom was given of her having heard it open. Miss Lester stood for a few moments as if fearful of intruding in this her own peculiar sanctum, but the occupant was immoveable. The long, fair, curling hair, shielded her face from observation, but there was something so unusually rigid in the attitude of the slight, childish figure, that a pang of intense anxiety shot through the kind heart of her who noticed it; and determined her, by a flash of thought, to postpone the investigation which had helped to lead her hither. So gently advancing.

"Amy," she said, "the news from Australia is favourable I hope?"

But the face which was slowly raised, in reply, was startling in its most unwonted expression. The eyes, generally so soft and meek, had in them an expression almost defiant; the cheeks were quite white; and the small mouth, before parting to allow a sound to issue, was compressed with some painful resolve. The silence was but momentary; its thrilling intensity, however, was never forgotten by the one who felt it. And then came the words—slowly—deliberately pronounced in a tone and manner strange to the experience of the hearer.

"I do not know whether the news is good or bad. The letter is to you. These few lines enclosed it to me."

And Amy Lyle held a large missive towards Miss Lester with one hand, while with a smile, sarcastic and almost ghastly, she glanced towards a morsel of thin paper she retained in the other.

"The letter for me!" ejaculated Beatrice; and looking quickly up at her, Amy saw, or fancied she saw, a bright crimson blush suffuse her cheek and throat.

"It is of pleasure;" was the bitter thought, but "read it;" she said, and that in a tone so harsh and authoritative, that it could not fail to strike the unaccustomed ear to which it was addressed.

Perhaps the warning of the Duchess recurred to Beatrice at that moment, the painful dislike which she declared to have been evinced; and this it might have been which chased the crimson from her brow and caused the momentary faintness which succeeded it. Every fluctuation of look and manner was keenly observed by Amy with her strange eyes so cold and glittering; but, whatever Beatrice felt under the influence of this demeanour, she retained her self-possession sufficiently to say, while breaking open the letter with a hand which visibly trembled.

"No, Amy, I will not read it until you have glanced over it; of course it is intended more for you than for me; there—thus do I burst through the bond with which Mr. Neville's idea of etiquette has swathed the matter;" and having torn it open,

she proffered the well-filled sheet of flimsy foreign paper. "Thank you—no; I would rather not," was the answer in the same constrained voice.

But, suddenly, there was something in the bearing and look of Beatrice Lester which compelled submission. It was not anger, nor the ordinary betrayal of offended dignity, but she appeared taller, handsomer, and older, as, advancing a step with the open paper still in her hand, she said :

"Amy Lyle, you must remember that the writer of this is almost a stranger to me. To you he is as a brother."

And laying down the letter on a table near, she moved towards the window.

The wretched girl, for wretched, justly or not, she really was, mechanically took it up. Perhaps she was awed by something beyond her ken into obedience; or it may be that the few simple words she had distinctly heard, were too reasonable to be disputed; but then that flickering colour on the face of Beatrice, and her tremulous hand!

The rustle of the paper was strangely loud to the hearing of Amy; her senses were, at the instant, shockingly acute and excited; for a minute the closely written lines, however, every letter of which in the well-known hand, seemed to stand out distinctly, refused to convey any meaning to her comprehension. Then the ideas formed themselves into

something like tangible order. At last she said, but this time the voice was somewhat husky and broken, "Miss Lester."

Beatrice turned, as if startled from some deep reverie.

"Miss Lester, I do not know—I cannot understand—the subjects of which it treats."

And she passed her thin hand over her brow, as if perplexed, or even wearied by the perusal. The motion might be attributed to physical pain. In a moment, Beatrice was by her side: yes—Beatrice herself again, with her own cordial glance and manner, although a very bright spot was burning on either cheek.

"Well, Amy; let me see if I can interpret it," she said, as she seated herself by the side of the orphan girl on the ottoman. And she read.

It was a long, but interesting account of the state of the colony as it was in 1851; its need of self-government, its strange social elements, and the confusion which the discovery of gold was likely to produce there, and in the Mother Land.

Then came a message, meek, pious, and hopeful, from the woman his late repentant fellow-passenger. Then, an allusion to the prophecy of Miss Lester that he would not long remain in Australia.

The letter spoke as little as possible of its writer, but this allusion necessitated the hint that he was

personally disappointed in the situation he had gone out to accept; that, in fact, the high official, his relation, was one of the worst specimens of arrogance, and red tapism.

Eustace alluded very gently to the evils of the home policy of which this man was a type; but Beatrice understood it too well to need much enlargement in illustration. He then proceeded to tell of his intention to accept an invitation from the good Bishop Selwyn, who had lately touched at the Australian port, where the young artist was so unpleasantly domiciled, to accompany him to New Zealand, where he was not promised money, but work. And with many apologies for his presumption in addressing Miss Lester at all, Eustace wound up his epistle to her, by a few eloquent words of gratitude as to her kindness to "his sister."

"And now, dear Amy, keep this letter;" said Beatrice, "as the first record of a life at the Antipodes, which will, I trust, be crowned with success to itself and others. Garner up with it, my earnest wishes for the welfare of its writer and yourself."

Amy made a movement as if she would shew the brief note that had served as the envelope, and was still clutched in her hand.

"No, no. Take them both to your own room;" and stooping down to kiss her forehead, Beatrice murmured, "may Heaven bless you, Amy."

And apparently somewhat tranquillized, the young girl slowly withdrew ; but as the door closed on her, a deep sigh, from the very heart as it seemed of her beautiful patroness, followed her.

But soon came the peculiar brightness on the face of Beatrice. Her hands were clasped as she stood there, alone. Her lips were slightly parted, as she looked upward, with the expression so well conveyed by the old Italian Masters. The eyes were radiant with the light which Eustace had first seen years ago, and had never forgotten. But the words of her soft, low voice were very simple ; incomprehensible, perhaps, because fragmentary of some train of evidently deep, but secret thought :

“ Oh ! that I may have power to make her happy ! ”

CHAPTER XXV.

On the Pavement—A Party in Belgrave Square—The Sculpture Gallery—Blues—Familiar Faces and Familiar Talk in 1851—The Cloak Room—A Rude Intrusion.

IN one of the houses in Belgrave Square, was assembled a goodly crowd that evening. It was not a ball, but dancing in one saloon, observable for the pure white and gold of its compartments, was permitted. The comparatively few pedestrians of that polite and accustomed neighbourhood, paused to gaze, as carriage after carriage drew up before the lofty portico, from which the striped canvas edged with crimson, was stretched to protect the fair ones who quickly disappeared beneath it into the large, well-lighted hall just visible beyond, with its delicious exotic plants; while, ever and anon, the ears of these pavement loungers were regaled with a far off, but ravishing burst of orchestral music, from within this enchanted palace, into which were entering those

visions of loveliness, all the more gracefully mysterious, and therefore, perhaps enchanting, for the elegant coverings which failed to conceal their charms during the quick transit across the pavement, or while waiting for their conductor's all-important craft of "setting down" in succession, without breaking the line of a coachman's etiquette.

But you, my reader, need not be left among the *canaille*, without you prefer their society, and exclamations of admiring delight (especially the ejaculations of the women at the fleeting sight of glittering gems and gauzy robes) to anything you may chance to find beyond that strange, that vast, but narrow Rubicon—a London pavement. I advise you to enter, for the real opinion of those outsiders, is suppressed by the presence of a blue coat and shining buttons; and a policeman, you know, or at all events, such a stern, stalwart one as this, is opposed to plebeian and pavement politics in Belgrave Square. Female curiosity *may* be gratified by the law of the Flagstone, its murmurs of appreciation are an approved incense even if reaching the powdered, glossy, and gorgeous liveried flunkies within; but as for you—mobmen! Silence, ye dogs; though of the true English breed. Behold the glazed hat, and the truncheon!

Through the large, open, but shaded windows you have been just able to catch a glimpse of the white and gold ceiling, from the opposite side of the

way; but enter by the force of memory or imagination. To the former (memory, I mean) there is no past; its scenes and characters are present; and in the case of a London party there is no declension of the tenses to make variety. Descriptions of such things in fashionable novels are often tedious, because for ever re-capitulating the external of a life which seems unchangeable; even in the smallest outward things, (the alteration of a fashion in dress, for example), there is nothing to strike you, suddenly, of the flight of time between one season and another. The eye becomes gradually educated; the London or Paris world is generally much too courteous for abrupt and violent contrasts in the little things of every day life. It is only when you take a hat or bonnet out of a box where it has been long enshrouded from the light of day, that you are conscious of the antediluvian monstrosity with which you once so self-complacently adorned yourself. But, the retrospect of a few years among the living, breathing, thinking, fragments of creation! Where are some of those who played the parts which now are enacted by others? Aye—verily; “we are all going to the play or coming from it;” the audience is satisfied with the present representation, perhaps. But, where is the man, the mode, or the ministry, but owes something to that which has gone before? What stone of the fabric may be dispensed with?

Life, music, hope, fear, flowers and beauty, were beneath the gilded roof of the white saloon ; with the usual elements appertaining to each and all of these when Belgravia welcomes, or permits, Terpsichore. The long sculpture gallery beyond, with its exquisitely arranged light, and silent forms, was filled with living grace. As it was not intended, however, to be an overpowering reception as to numbers, the crowd, within that magnificent range of apartments, permitted conversation to those who preferred it to other amusements. Presently, beneath one of the first statues of coloured marble, which had reached this country from that well-known studio in Italy,—where the old experiment has been tried to imbue with the tints of warm life the creations of pure, cold marble,—stood a dandy in a *pose*, unmindful of the dainty goddess in pale pink gauze, leaning on his arm. I cannot say they had been dancing, for the trouble would, probably, have been too great, the fatigue too overpowering, for this young officer ; who, innocent of ever having fleshed his maiden sword, was in command of many a veteran, brave, rough, tough, and worthy. Suddenly he let fall the eye-glass which had been doing duty.

“ Ha !” said he to his companion, “ much better than I could have supposed. Ha—upon my honour !”

“ Who—what ?” asked the young lady, almost

supposing it was the tinted statue of which he spoke, new to her, but towards which he had turned his back.

"Ha—why—don't you see? Ha—that Miss Lester—who—ha—has made such a sort of sensation?"

"Oh!—where?" she asked.

"Ha—over there—opposite; it's a pity she's so blue, and all that, you know. Ha—rather fine creature—upon my honour—ha! And very rich—you know—ha."

"Is *that* Miss Lester?" demanded the demoiselle; but more, perhaps, in the tone of a soliloquy than as if expecting an answer from this soldier of peace, to whom talking, like dancing and fighting, might be a "deuced bore;" (and demoiselles know better than to harass or oppress such petted social victims).

"Well," she continued, "I do not see so very much in her after all, there is something almost affectedly plain in that undecorated white dress, (her own costume was awfully elaborate), and, that coronet of black hair wants more relief than the pearl aigrette at the side." (The young lady's own head was a perfect offering to Flora). "But—what can you expect—she's *so* strange, they say! As she cannot exactly set up for a beauty, you see, she affects eccentricity, you know; thinks herself clever, and all that, I am told. Oh, dear me! how

frightened I should be if I had to speak to her—he—he.” And the young lady tittered behind her huge bouquet.

But half of this was lost on her “carpet knight;” perhaps he was measuring the length of his sword against that of the reputed full purse opposite.

“Ha—pity she’s political,” said he.

“Political!” gasped the pink goddess, “oh! that’s more horrid than anything I could have imagined.”

“Why—ha—don’t you see—don’t you know—ha—the singular looking man who is now talking—ha—to her?”

“What that dark, extremely handsome person? Who can he be?” responded Flora, who thus took a little sly revenge on her cavalier, who was excessively fair.

“Ha—no—not that fellow—don’t know him—ha—you know; but that one with the long hair—ha—just now speaking to the Duchess of Ayrton; ha—that’s—ha—Sir William Mornington—you know.”

“But don’t you think the dark gentleman, that stranger, is an admirer of the Duchess?” asked this playful young lady, without heeding the last piece of information. “Although her daughters are quite grown up—she’s fond of admiration—he—he.”

“Pretty woman—ha: but *passée*, you know,” was the answer; and they moved on.

Then came a lady, fresh, young, but matronly, leaning on the arm of her brother, from whom, until his return from a long Eastern journey only yesterday, she had been separated since her marriage. Unlike most of the people present, he stopped, now and then, to admire some beautiful group of sculpture. At last, looking in the direction from which the superlative's eye-glass had just been withdrawn—

“But who is that lady?” he asked.

Glancing towards the spot indicated, his sister answered,

“Oh! that is Miss Lester.”

“Very distinguished,” was the reply.

“Certainly;” was the candid rejoinder, “and not only for beauty, but wealth and wit.”

“Do you know her, Kate?”

“Strange to say, I never saw her until to-night. And I must confess,” she added, laughing, “to a horrible delusion respecting her. The words ‘rich and intellectual,’ gave me a notion of somebody pursy, and frizzly. You know, Arthur, what a specimen of the *intellectual* our old governess was? Well—I always have retained her image as the type of the species; oh, don’t you remember her little stiff carotty curls—that she declared were the true rare ‘auburn’—twisting and writhing about her

bald-looking forehead, on which she illustrated the phrenology—and fine developements of which she raved ?”

“Ah, Kate,” he answered, with a kind smile, “I am afraid that Gorgon with her snake-wreathed head and her bumps has much to answer for, in keeping all the ologies out of your’s. But seriously,” he added, “what a classical-looking creature that Miss Lester is! Ah—now—she is positively beautiful—speaking with animation on some subject that seems to interest her.” And what was the subject ?

But by the time the intervening crowd could be penetrated, she was silent, though listening with interest to what those immediately around her were saying ; the present speaker was Major Percival, that extremely handsome and dark incognito whom the pink goddess had noticed from the opposite side ; he was addressing Sir William Mornington, that conscientious politician recently pointed out to him in the Crystal Palace, with his long hair, drab-buttoned boots, and white hat, on whose heart the interests of our Colonies were supposed to be engraven ; not even forgotten now, when standing by the side of Miss Lester, with one hand in his waistcoat, and a plain eye-glass suspended round his neck—very quiet, and though singular-looking, perfectly unassuming. He was not, perhaps, often thus drawn

forth from his study, of his own free-will ; that study seemed the arena of his private happiness and ambition. His labours there from a youth, stimulated by a good mother's sympathy, are well known.

"Yes—it is quite true, Sir William, but the whole thing can only be estimated by those who happened to be at the Cape, as I was, just as the excitement in Kaffirland about witchcraft was renewed in consequence of a want of rain."

"Notwithstanding Sir Harry Smith had declared to Lord Grey that British Kafraria was becoming an Elysium," said Sir William, with a quiet smile.

"And that he had dubbed himself 'Inkosi Inkulu!'" laughed the Duchess of Ayrton.

"But you were right, Sir William," continued the Major, "when you recently declared in the House that the Kaffir races hate us."

"Ah ! I remember," said Beatrice ; "you put into the mouth of the Kaffir Chief the words of Sir Roderic Dhu ; and although you professedly repudiate works of fiction, Sir William, you paid, moreover, a passing tribute of praise in that same speech, to the interesting tale of the Kaffir wars ; from which you quoted the similarity of the Kaffir hatred to that of the Gael towards the Saxon."

Sir William looked pleasantly towards Beatrice.

"Not many ladies," he said, "would have so well remembered ; the animosities of the town are gene-

rally more interesting to them than the feuds of Kaffir land."

"Aye," she said, archly, "but I thought I had convicted you in an amiable inconsistency; a relaxation from the professed severity of your literary requirements, when you brought up the fiction to maintain your facts."

"But seriously," resumed Major Percival, who seemed to Beatrice strangely bent on paying his court to Sir William Mornington, foreseeing in him, no doubt, the future head of a department opening a wide field to those whose old-world path is inconveniently narrow, but forgetful that his integrity would prevent mere patronage; "but seriously, Sir William, the evil of this Kaffir hatred is very threatening, because we cannot, as you so well demonstrated, exterminate the race."

"Why not?" asked the Duchess, who, still standing near, was not, truth to say, much interested; but, seeing the statesman disinclined to retail his views in private, the Major was forced to proceed, which he did by again flattering the philosophic Baronet by another covert allusion to his own views, recently expressed in public.

"Because their numbers are not only unlimited, but they extend far beyond the other side the equator; so that fresh supplies can be sent down from an apparently inexhaustible region out of the

reach of European civilization or European aggression."

"The difficulty of climate," said Beatrice, "seems to me the stumbling-block of an effectual and thoroughly independent possession of land in other latitudes."

"Yes," responded the Duchess, turning towards Major Percival, "why—in India, you know, you are dependent on the natives for the common offices of a civilized existence, to say nothing of your public works; while the children of European parents are separated from them when of an age to need the bracing air which alone accords with our race."

"But this want (of necessity making us more tolerant and liberal) may seal the bond of civilization;" answered Beatrice, "as in most matters, it resolves itself into the proverb of 'give and take.'"

"But civilization in any of our distant possessions," said Sir William, "can only be perfected by Self-Government, and Self-Payment. Old Colonial-Office despotism, and ignorant selfishness presuming to rule from the other end of the world, would prevent a permanently good result."

"And I am sorry to say," replied the Major, "that, too many I know abroad, at the seat of action, would oppose a more just, rational, and

liberal policy, because they have only their own narrow interests at heart."

Beatrice was silent; this turn of the conversation recalled the letter of that morning.

"But Lord Dalhousie is doing great things in India?" asked the Duchess.

"Yes, certainly; he has departed from the old exclusiveness, and, without a baneful preference for soldiers or civilians, combines the best men for the work in hand."

Again Beatrice seemed interested.

"And why should not we have an administration of all the talents?" she said, glancing playfully towards Sir William. "There, now, goes one with whom I should like to see you in harness," continued she, bowing to a gentleman who just passed.

"What!" he ejaculated, "see me in harness with a Puseyite?"

"Ah!" exclaimed the Duchess, "Beatrice has a great respect for you both, Sir William, although I really do not think that any one but herself would have faith in the amalgamation of such conflicting elements."

"You start a problem which many would protest against as utterly impracticable," he answered, turning to Beatrice.

"Oh! but their protestations do not forbid the possibility of an early solution," she said.

"You must know," rejoined the Duchess, speaking to Major Percival, "that the liberality of my friend, Miss Lester, is shown in nothing more than her cordial appreciation of an honest man, let his party robe be of what colour it may. She often, in her wild moods, entertains me, and horrifies my husband, by what he calls her 'Utopian notions of a Coalition Ministry.'"

"Then you cannot accuse me of politics," said Beatrice, deprecatingly, "because they are generally inseparable from party—

'The madness of many for the gain of the few.'"

Sir William shook his head. Did he foresee the time when he would indeed be "in harness" with the very man who had just passed? Did some vision arise of himself, a few years after this desultory chat, standing up for the last time in the Senate—honoured and respected by the Sovereign and her people—the chief of that peculiar and important branch of administration to which he had dedicated himself so long and untiringly, but assailed by that "very man" with whom he had worked in the interim, and whom he could not but esteem? Did he see himself, though confessing to a general and careful preparation of his parliamentary speeches,

suddenly called upon to vindicate himself against an attack "begun in malice, and ending in metaphysics," and triumphant in the answer which Truth, that ever most eloquent special-pleader, improvised? If so, he foresaw the curtain, behind which he had so long played an honest part, lowering portentously. It fell on that Session, leaving him standing in his honoured place—the conqueror. When it rose again, his place was occupied by another: he was nowhere to be seen. But the Colonies, as all who run may read, are reaping the benefit of this man's labour, official or otherwise.

But to return.

"The progress of social reform in India is cheering, under this better state of things," said Major Percival, addressing himself to Beatrice, in whose favour he seemed particularly anxious to ingratiate himself.

"And it is delightful, if all accounts be true," she answered, "to find native intelligence is quite apt enough to help on the mighty work; to develop that intelligence, wherever we find it, seems to me the real end of Christian enterprise and colonization. In this light, we may really, some day, look on the Anglo-Indians as the true 'Kings of the East.'"

"But Leadenhall Street must not be timid in Indian religious policy," said Sir William.

"Because," answered Beatrice, "there is no reason why we should think evil in any form so Omnipotent and Eternal as Good; especially the evil of superstition."

"But, to my mind," said the Duchess, "there is no sign so cheering and agreeable as the abolition of the widow-burning."*

Every one laughed at the way in which the pretty little Duchess said this; but, in a minute, Beatrice resumed:

"Yet how wonderful the admirable fortitude with which they met their fate! By the bye, Sir William, those records of female heroism are enough to shame the philosophy of your old favourite—Hobbes of Malmesbury. He had a great dread of death."

"Ah!" he replied, "but Hobbes met it very calmly when it did come."

"It is well to submit to the decree of an inevitable necessity with a good grace," she answered, "and, through your interpretation of his writings, we have been taught how to define necessity."

And laughingly Miss Lester accepted Major Percival's arm to conduct her to the cloak-room; and, the Duke coming up at the moment to find his wife, the little group was separated.

* If the duchess could have foreseen the recent marriage of the Hindoo widow she would still more have appreciated her favourite fact.

Did Beatrice, who seldom said a flippant word on a serious subject, reproach herself long after, with that jesting allusion? Perhaps not; after events in her life came thick and fast enough to obliterate its memory.

Before she had proceeded far, leaning on the arm of her strange companion, who, for some undefinable reason excited her curiosity, she stopped to speak to the celebrated author, whom the Major remembered to have seen at the Crystal Palace—the one pointed out by Captain Villars as unfortunate in his portraiture of women, though not so capable of “lashing” her as a certain reviewer.

“Ah!” she said, cordially shaking him by the hand, “I have much to thank you for: Mrs. Seymour and I were delighted with the last number of ——; but—”

“What?” he smilingly asked.

“Forgive me; but where is the use of shewing, with such painful accuracy, the evils around us, without pointing out their remedy? What should you feel if, calling in a skilful surgeon or physician, he made you feel thoroughly uncomfortable by a minute and learned explanation of the cause of your suffering, and then, without a word of guidance as to its modification or removal, he abruptly ran away, leaving you with an anatomical mirror in your own hand?”

"But suppose he only runs away to let another, greater than himself, step in?"

"He should leave the patient, after so unnerving him, a sedative hope to that effect."

"But if the case be hopeless—the heart diseased?"

"Nay," she said, "you are trying to provoke me into some Dulcamara proclamation of an universal philtre, an unfailing antidote. But you know very well, that the heart of the body politic or social is *not* diseased. There is suffering because the heart is too much compressed for proper action."

"A case of tight lacing! I do, therefore, but endeavour to restrain the hands."

"But do not forget that the eyes may find better things above them to contemplate, than when poking about on the ground below, despite all the objects and 'connecting links,' with hard names, which people have suddenly taken such a fancy to."

"And does not Miss Lester, whom the world declares a *savante*, never dive about, with a trowel, for lovely polypes, and choice molluscs, to say nothing of a pet frog?"

"That indeed she does not;" was her laughing reply, "when she is by the sea-side, she likes to look out on the vast ocean, and try to descry a

distant vessel, even if it be but a speck on the horizon. But, above all, when she and others may cry 'night and darkness,' she loves to behold the stars. '*Regardez en haut*' is her motto. Let it be your's also, even when the tide washes to your feet the evidences of a wreck, the fragments of a goodly vessel, which the war of the elements has severed in pieces."

Then resuming her usual manner.

"But how bold I am to talk to you so freely ! Thank you, thank you again for even the awe with which you inspire me when absent." And waving her hand she again moved onward.

"Do you think he is a greater author than Dickens?" asked her companion.

"Comparisons are so odious ;" she answered with a smile, and little shrug of her white shoulders. "I have a great regard for both."

"But which is the more popular?"

"I will answer you by repeating what this man, this great satirist, (even in the portraiture of himself,) said on this subject the other day—'I envy Dickens ; he finds his way into the cottage, and the poor man's home ; while I find myself only on the drawing-room tables of Mayfair.'"

"And is that," asked the Major "what he intended by saying that he had to do with the hands

more than the heart? Are the hands in Mayfair, and the heart elsewhere?"

Then without pausing for a reply, he inquired the name of a very fair and beautiful woman, who had just inclined her head towards Miss Lester.

"It is the Countess of ——" she answered, and then continued, with an arch smile, "had I time, I would introduce you to her; your conversation might inform her as to some points on which she needs enlightenment. She expressed, the other day, her surprise when told by an Anglo-Indian like yourself, that the whole of Hindostan was not Christian."

"But she is more learned, is she not, in the mysteries of the Stock Exchange?"

"Scandal hath so proclaimed; but if there be any truth in the rumour, it only shews the need of some leading subject in life. Nothing can be more wearisome than London without a hobby."

"And do you consider the need of a legitimate one has caused others of your sex and time to seek the stimulus of a false excitement, as rumour declares them to have done within the last few years?"

"I think much misery in many homes may be traced to such a want."

"And does the man who is now speaking to her supply such a want? I have been told he is a great speculator," said the Major.

"I really do not know," answered Beatrice, "the only time I ever saw him before to-night, was in reference to a picture we both wanted by—by—(well, no matter the name of the artist, as he is unfortunately unknown to fame), but I believe he is connected with some great railway."

"Does he set up for virtuoso on the length and strength of his purse?" asked the Major; and then, added, truly enough, whoever might be his text—"Such patchwork taste that wealth produces is lamentable;—such collections of rubbish, such a distortion of one faculty in the collector, to the exclusion of that entireness essential to a perfect taste! But this man, I now remember, has the reputation of much refined perception of some such sort; and at all events appreciated, as it seems, by others as well as her fair ladyship;" for at this moment a dignitary of the church had joined them.

"I do not know," answered Beatrice, "if the reputation be just; although the fact has found favour of his having lately outbidden an illustrious personage in France for a certain carved image which Paris was mad after."

"But that was a money triumph. After so long an absence as mine, the adulation to wealth seems terrific in England," said the Major, with an indignation real, or well-affected.

"To money and success," agreed Miss Lester, "The one is the idol, the other the creed of the present day."

"Detestable!" exclaimed her companion. But she was silent, and for two reasons. Beatrice felt much too keenly on the point for any ordinary adjectives to clothe her disgust;—and there was a certain something in the Major's tone and manner which failed to carry conviction to her own sincere heart of his integrity. There is no perception so keen as that of a good woman.

Without another word, therefore, they reached the cloak-room where the Duchess of Ayrton was awaiting her friend.

"I can scarcely wonder what has delayed you, Beatrice," she said, "for I saw you exchanging a few shots on the way with my favourite author."

"He might well be spoiled by the knowledge of such an honoured appellation," said Major Percival, much too obsequiously to ensure her Grace's good opinion.

"No—he is not spoiled;" she answered, almost abruptly, "you remember," she added, turning to her portly and usually silent husband, "that he was the only person who gave any evidence of regret when going to that unfortunate Gore House, after the flight of its inhabitants."

"I thought it highly absurd," was the not very

pertinent reply "for the world to manifest curiosity, as at the time of the sale there, respecting an interior from which, of course, it had been excluded by its own very proper decree."

"Undoubtedly ;" replied her Grace, with a slightly impatient movement of her little white satin foot ; "but it was something worse than absurd for the few who had chosen to cross the threshold in former days, to make a gala of the sad sequel to its hospitality."

"Even in India we heard of the amusement which was derived from the inspection of the home from whence their entertainers had been driven ; and of the pleasant remarks suggested by the Lares with which a taste once so flattered had surrounded itself," said the Major, determined to support her Grace's view of the case.

"But tears, (unobserved but by one I believe) were shed by our satirist," she replied addressing herself again to her husband. "He thought of the heart which was crushed by this publicity of home."

"Pshaw—my dear Georgina," he answered, but kindly, "you confuse the unfortunate lady with some heroine in her novels."

"I knew her, formerly, in Italy," said Major Percival.

"But that must have been a long time ago?"

responded the Duchess, with an elevation of her eyebrows, as of surprise. There was a momentary embarrassment, but Beatrice saved herself the trouble of a reply by exclaiming.

"Ah! have you ever been in Italy?—Did you remain long there? It is partly my own land."

"A long time ago," echoed the Major, but confusedly—as he assisted Miss Lester in the arrangement of her cloak: "No—I was but a bird of passage—is it partly your own land?" The difference of light in the hall, into which they now passed, might account for the sudden change in Major Percival's complexion while uttering these few disjointed phrases; but, whatever the cause, it did not escape the notice of Miss Lester. Some strange instinct made her shudder and shrink from his side.

"He is certainly very handsome," said the Duchess, as the carriage drove off.

"I do not like him," replied Beatrice, who seldom gave utterance to aught but a kind opinion.

"Nor I, my dear Miss Lester;" was the hearty rejoinder of the Duke; "and, moreover, I cannot understand who he is, what he is, or how he has found a place among us."

After they had gone, Major Percival stood for a minute alone, in the room just vacated. He

was certainly extremely pale—different looking, older, more haggard, than any one would have believed possible who had witnessed his seeming self-content, and obsequiousness just before.

“She is d—d handsome,” he muttered between his teeth, while the muscles round his mouth quivered with a sarcastic and subtle expression, and the peculiarly dark eyes were colder, and more glittering than ever—“beautiful—but difficult to deal with. Her knowledge of the world counteracts her youth. But after all, a mere woman can be no very dangerous thing to deal with!—yet wealth, friends, high position!—” He clenched his hand and walked to and fro, as if, under some great excitement, unconscious where he was. Then, with a smile almost ghastly he stopped; and lifting the still compressed hand to his forehead—he gasped out: “By—when I think of those, my part shall be played out! The stake is all, or—” but at this instant some ladies entered, and regaining his composure with incredible facility, the Major was once more the haughty handsome man, who had attracted the flattering notice of more than one that night.

Soon afterwards he took his departure, but was detained for a minute on the pavement, while the link boy, whose nocturnal office has been pronounced as only inferior to “a crossing,” called his brougham.

Another carriage claiming precedence, he walked a few stately steps to meet his own snug and well-appointed conveyance ; its door was open, the link boy was standing by, awaiting the possibility of ' his honour's ' remembrance, and the tall policeman was just visible through the line of carriages, marching up and down the opposite side, when a strange hand, suddenly laid on Major Percival's arm, caused him to pause and look round in startled surprise. The light from the lamps of the brougham fell on the slouching figure of a man, with a battered hat and torn coat, buttoned to the chin. Although his face was scarcely visible, it was evident that he was one of the class sufficiently suspicious, dangerous, and disreputable for the " move on " of the policeman, if he had only been near enough to push him, morally or physically, out of that polite path. As it was, the link boy rushed off after some more promising speculation, and the Major was left alone with the shabby intruder. Although the man's hat was slouched, it was evident that the countenance beneath was not unknown, that it was too perceptible to the one who recognized it with a frozen eye and blanched lip. The Major and the man faced each other for a moment in silence, the former with one foot still on the step of his carriage, and the latter without unloosing his grasp—then :

"I must see you," said the man, in a hoarse but menacing whisper.

"But not here," was the answer.

"To-morrow night, then," replied the stranger, slightly raising his voice, and tightening his clutch. "To-morrow—this will tell you where," and he thrust a dirty crumpled piece of paper into the Major's hand, then he added: "You know what for; I'm —— if you escape me this time. Bring it with you, or by all you don't believe in, I'll let the bloodhounds out after you, even if they scent my track, too; there's nothing for me to lose, and everything for you. Swear, now, be there, or you know—"

"I do," answered the Major, and added some words in too low a voice to be heard, but by the ear ready to receive them. And the next moment he was alone, with the paper clenched tightly in his hand. Then, mechanically as it seemed, uttering the name of a well known club, he hastily closed the carriage door, and pulled down the blinds. What horrors did he endure in the brief minutes which sufficed to convey him to the destination he had named?

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Major and his Young Friend—The Sanctum of Charity—A Game at Whist—Alone—In Memoriam again—A Vision.

WHEN he arrived there, he was speedily joined by a dissipated, but handsome-looking young man, whom Captain Villars once designated as Spenser of Ours, when speaking of the influence sometimes exercised over others by the Anglo-Indian who had lately made his appearance in their set. Not a trace of his recent profound emotion was visible on Major Percival's face; he replied even gaily to the greeting of the young officer as to "What the deuce had kept him in that confounded slow place so long?"

"Why, the fact of its slowness," he answered, as they drove off together, "prevented haste in making an easy exit."

"I suppose you met the usual queer medley there? Found yourself in a menagerie of celebri-

ties—politicians—literati—and a small bevy of the beauties ?”

“ I think the latter were in a minority.”

“ They always are at that house. I never go there if I can help it, for I’m always bored. Lately, the Duchess of Ayrton has vouchsafed her presence ; a sign of the degeneracy of her age, and portentously significant as to her husband’s party.”

“ She was there to-night, and Miss Lester with her.”

“ Ah ! fine creature, but monstrously opinionated. All owing, no doubt, to the queer way she was brought up by some mad uncle, who lived with her alone at the Land’s End.”

“ Do you think he *was* mad ?” asked the Major, with sudden interest.

“ Upon my life, I can’t say. All I know is, she’s confoundedly rich.”

“ What is the use of wealth to a woman ?” asked the Major.

“ Only makes her crotchety, and difficult to manage,” was the answer. “ Now, the father of the man to whose house we are going, married an heiress of his class—but found her impracticable.”

“ Was her money more malleable ?”

“ Yes ; for on that, they say, he began life, and a deuced rate of interest his son manages to get for it.”

"Are there many money-lenders of this sort in London?"

"You may soon find an answer to your cost," was the answer, with a bitter laugh.

"But, I mean, as to their affecting a social position?"

"Yes; but more, perhaps, under the leaf. We never know, it would seem, our real pecuniary friends. The man who listens to your woes, receives you with outstretched arms, and pooh-poohing your embarrassments as too trifling to need further discussion, generously, as you suppose, in verdant youth, relieves them; won't listen to your protestations—only wants your company, in return, at his hospitable board. But the full extent of his delicacy is only known when, long after, in appealing to him against some array of figures, incomprehensible even to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or head of the Treasury, he tells you that, after all, it was not he who helped you in your need—'O no; my dear fellow, I wish I *could* assist you; but it is Jones or Thomson or your own father's head-coachman or steward, to whom you must appeal—all I can do in the matter, is to explain the case for you to those in whose hands it rests.' So, you see, Verdant Green, just out of his mamma's leading-strings, had no need to have been oppressed, years before, by the liberality of his friend who ignores the obligation."

"But this one?"

"Is an old acquaintance of mine, and a man of starch propriety. Methodical in his habits. Gets up, walks, eats, drinks, and even plays at the appointed hours. His life is clock-work. His household unexceptionable, from the precise housekeeper downwards. His kindness even manifests the love of order. Everything in its place, and at the proper time; even to the gentle young creature and her children, to whom (benevolently, of course) he accords his protection in this neighbourhood, or (as some believe) the more intractable individual he has subdued, for her own welfare, in that. O, believe me, his method is invincible; his routine (the routine which is virtue) has gained Respectability, in her most matronly cap, for his supporter. A man so rich, a routine so perfect—what patterns to our corrupt society!"

"His grandmother herself might be proud of him," answered the Major; "but his name—I have forgotten—what did you tell me?"

"By name and nature, 'Smiley.' For when there's a howling got up about trafficking on a poor devil's wants, let us remember that Smiley has saved many a one from drowning; even though the rope thrown out to him, may serve to hang him afterwards."

And the carriage stopped before a neat doorway in one of those streets hushed by the august presence of

the aristocracy, but not presuming to trespass upon its sublimely bland protection by any sound but a deferential and admiring echo to its august will.

The hall was well lighted, the staircase richly carpeted, the servant who led them up its noiseless way, sedate and deferential. The drawing-rooms, into which they were ushered, contained only a few gentlemen just arrived (who seemed to know each other), if I except their mute arrangements, most prominent among which were two green card-tables. The light was subdued, but brilliant; the draperies sober of colour, but rich in arrangement; a few objects of vertu, scattered about on side-tables of various form, very elegant and rare. The only thing which might strike the visitor as out of keeping was the size of some fine paintings against the walls; fine, but out of place there, especially as the rooms, although commodious, were not large. Soon, a clock tolled the hour, and immediately its example was followed by two or three of its smaller brethren, in different, but, all, delicious tones—up to those so clear and silvery, from one of those mouthpieces of Time which resembled the fairy-music of some land of the Peri.

And then the host entered; a quiet, gentlemanly, well-dressed man, the perfection of whose appearance and manner was too devoid of anything sufficiently *prononcé* for description. He might not

have attracted, for this reason, any particular observation in any house but his own. An irregularity of feature, though detrimental to beauty in its orthodox sense, often impresses the memory with a distinctness, which the more correct type would fail to command. And thus the individuality of this bland host was not remarkable. Even his age was a matter of uncertain conjecture.

But, at last, after saying a kind and quiet word to others, he was presented by his young friend, Spenser, to Major Percival. Their eyes met.

A momentary glance of intense scrutiny superseded the generally bland expression of the genial and epicurean entertainer, and during that instant, the face of the guest, though apparently unconscious in his general and conventional deportment, became white as death.

But all this was instantaneous. Nobody observed the signs of that moment. The words spoken were tranquil and common-place; their welcome seemed cordial, but more than once, during that night, when all his visitors were absorbed in play, the eyes of the host were rivetted, with the same peculiar expression by some strange and incomprehensible fascination, on the dark, but handsome lineaments of the stranger. The Major won largely.

The supper was perfect in its unostentatious refinement. During that repast, the new guest found that

his partner up-stairs was the celebrated novelist, who about that time surprised and charmed the world by opening a new strata of its truth, and a better vein of his own experience. Few of the uninitiated could believe that the new numbers of an anonymous work with all their vigorous freshness, learned research, and domestic purity, could emanate from the being so blasé, or drop from the pen which had more than once distilled sentiment too unadulterated for family reception and daily use. He had been considered so dangerous in quiet domestic circles, but now—fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, all made way for him beside their hearth. From whence the change? The worldly have declared it was brought about by prosperity; others by the unsatisfactory review of a life and genius misunderstood, misplaced, and misappropriated. The upas tree over his head had deepened in its shadow, embittering every fruit, and withering every flower within its reach, and compelling a search beyond its influence.

As the senses of our first parents are described by the great poet as first bathed in delight by the forbidden fruit, elevated for a brief period by its wondrous and delicious juices, and lulled into an enervated unconsciousness, but soon roused by the terrible awaking of a satiated appetite and the agonizing certainty of a new shame, so do some, wandering in the paradise of a prosperous youth, call evil,

good, and tempt others to follow them in the path so pleasant, by which it is approached. But afterwards, a sad experience proclaims a different decree ; wisdom and knowledge are appreciated as distinct ; the former is a check on the uses of the latter. Yet, more lamentable than strange to say, you may sometimes find, even after the intellectual redemption, that habit is a stronghold. Hence the explanation that Major Percival should have found the Champion of Virtue at the card table in that house, and shared with him the spoil of one heart, (beneath the calm exterior of a man of the world) well nigh broken by the failure of this new attempt to repair a long list of pecuniary mistakes and carry peace to the home and its dear ones, whose love had been the incentive of this desperate endeavour to avert a ruinous crisis. None there, (no, not even the great author with all his intuition,) guessed the anguish of the unsuccessful adversary, as, thinking of the meek young confiding wife awaiting him in anxiety, and the little ones in their beds, he talked more gaily than usual, and, though eating little, tossed off glass after glass of wine at supper, in a manner most unusual in one of his generally reserved and abstemious habit. Did the host suspect the truth ? O—no ; for, he neither warned nor helped him.

Perfect, placid, and polite, he seemed to have faith in the enjoyment he had promoted.

And that night, sat Amy Lyle, alone, in her small but elegantly arranged chamber, in a street not very far off. On a table before her, were spread the two letters from Australia ; while an exquisite bouquet of flowers was lying by her side.

The lamp was burning low, for the hour was very late, and by its rays she looked even more pale and haggard than in the days of want and woe. Her hair was pushed back from her face, and revealed its intensely anxious expression, and the deep circles round her eyes significant of recent weeping. With her head resting on one thin white hand, she seemed absorbed in a deep study of the papers before her ; at length, pushing them away, she clasped both hands convulsively together, and uttered a faint laugh, more terrible, in its low, derisive tones, than any weeping. Then, taking up the flowers, looking almost calmly on their beauty of form and colour, and inhaling their fragrance, she cast them down, with an action of contempt, on the letters which had engaged her earnest attention, exclaiming :

“ I see now, the love which lies concealed in every line ; it thrills in every word of this letter to her he calls ‘ his guide,’ his ‘ inspiration of a better hope’ — and Amy’s benefactress !” Then, catching it up, she laughed again, and more wildly — as once more looking on the well-known page “ Oh, yes !” she

exclaimed, "he tells her of things the weak Amy is too ignorant to comprehend—they have interests and aspirations in common, far beyond the wretched dependent's understanding. And what is this? *Her* care following in the wake of his ship! Care? Care of Eustace!"

Then, with a burst of passionate emotion. "But what is any care this proud Beatrice Lester can lavish to equal my love! She has money—everything the world can bestow—but my love was all I had to give!

"Oh! if I could have rescued him, as she might have done! Had I power, equal to one tithe of my love; would he now have been a stranger in a distant land? *And she knows he loves her.* Why did she blush and tremble? And to-night when she brought me these flowers—her cast-off flowers—there was a mournfulness in her manner, which the heart, loving as mine, knows too well how to interpret. Beatrice! Had you never stepped in between us—he would have been mine alone. No other memory would have interfered, with that of the sister and friend he knew so well; but now the one memory (for did he not say once that we were all in all to each other!) the one memory is eclipsed by intellect—beauty—wealth—power! It was in poverty *I* loved him—it was in misery I learned to do so. Ah! how I sympathized with his every want—how I stifled my own anguish that his suffering might be lessened! Why

did I not die then? What is the use of a love and helplessness like mine on earth!"

And her head sunk down on the table. The lamp burned lower and lower. Then, by its flickering glare, suddenly raising her face—and flinging up her arms in despair; "It makes me loathe the poverty I feel. Oh! where can its refuge be? My efforts at independence are baffled—the chains gall me—madden me; I will not—I dare not for my own eternal sake, stand by looking on at this triumph of wealth! It will always triumph—it has conquered even him! Yet no—no—ungenerous that I am! How lowly and useful his life! Useful! where can *I* be useful? What can I do to banish this great wickedness—to overcome this madness of my heart? Oh! trial worse than death!"

And the images conjured up by the last word were not soothing. Amy felt as if estranged, in this, her wild anguish, from the loving hearts, so calm to the last, which had now ceased to beat. She felt, in her hopelessness, excommunicate from the "patience" which they had manifested to the last. Her soul was darkened, and she even dreaded the idea of a spiritual presence, the "great wisdom," which could fathom its torments.

Poor unhappy wanderer! This galling self-reproach, and fancied estrangement, were not the least part of her burthen. She had not yet arrived at that

blessed hope, that "whether we climb or fall" the purified may watch with an understanding, a wisdom, more enlightened and prophetic than that of mortals with their puny ken, and ever ready condemnation. Ah! for a purified commiseration! Let its memory be a healing balm to the writhing outcast! Remember that the philosophy of this world is very narrow; its decrees know but little mitigation; including all under some favourite clause, without any allowance for time, place, idiosyncrasy; a moral, or even a physical variation, which may help on, or retard the exercise of its code in the individual. The world is too often ignorant and unjust; always too sweeping in its censure; too slow to "discern the good," too forgetful that every medal has its reverse.

But let us not "wrong the grave with fears untrue."

" Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
There must be wisdom with great death:
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'."

Poverty—death—faith—fear. These things led on the harassed mind of Amy to a new consideration;—the retreat offered to misery—a sanctuary for the bruised heart, among women who have known suffering, and found that nothing is too mean, no human being too lowly to help forward a great and glorious work.

"Ah! if I could but flee to such a refuge," exclaimed Amy Lyle, "I might yet be honoured if not happy—useful, if not transcendent. I might regain something of the old calm and peace. If wicked, repentance. But here! Never. The very perfume of these flowers oppresses me. What have I to do with the gay scene into which they have been carried!" Then after another pause, "How beautiful she looked when bringing them to me! What kind concern as to finding me still up! But then, she can well afford to lavish proofs, and looks, and deeds of kindness. She who possesses all—even *that*."

Then came back the yearning after those whose sisterhood is only of sorrow. Suddenly, the lamp on the table, sent forth one fitful gleam, and then she was in darkness.

But, as if unconscious of the change, Amy still sat on, meditating on sympathy—prayers—equality—death. The flowers emitted a delicious perfume in the darkened room, and, stealing over the senses of its lonely inmate, she had a vision of an altar decorated with these choice emblems. She fancied she heard the Evening Service chanted by a hundred voices—the rich tones of the organ sounded in her ears; her hand was clasped by one who had known misery like herself. She knew the pressure was of a love most sympathizing and re-assuring, but she could not see the face, nor discern the form beneath

the conventual dress which she wore. Then stepped forth an aged priest ; she looked up and recognised her father. The music was hushed : a fervent blessing found its echo in her heart.

Then deep silence ; a silence more potent in its influence than the reverberation of the music, or even the human tones just heard. Looking up again, she beheld her father still, but retreating towards the innermost sanctuary, yet with his hands spread out, as if invoking some peculiar mercy on her and the unknown, but loving sister.

Amy slept. The dawn found her with her fair head resting on the table, and supported by her crossed arms.

The long hair was tinged with gold by the morning sun, as it drooped on the flowers still by her side, and touched with its dishevelled luxuriance, the letters cast down in such an agony of despair.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Summer Evening's Stroll from Belgravia to Bermondsey—The Major in a Maze—The Top Garret—The Sick Child—An Old Acquaintance—The Husband—Revelation—Lazy Landlord.

THE River Thames presents a goodly and refreshing sight (to those, at least, in happy ignorance of Faraday and filth) on a summer's evening. On its bosom lie prosperity and industry, while the means of recreation proclaim the health and happiness which are their result. Vessels laden, the steam boats plying their pleasant way—the crowded quays; how animated and goodly a site! Then (not to stop and quarrel about their site, nor give way to any gloomy forebodings it may suggest) the architectural glories of the Senate House, reposing beneath the venerable shadow of the grand and all-eloquent old Abbey! The memory, too, of the fair parks and gardens through which the traveller has just passed, the vision of a royal

residence, of almost impossible soldiers seated on magnificent horses impervious as knights of old to the attack of anything below their dignity, and typical of a heroism believed in as something super-human by the admiring crowd; how stolid, grand, immoveable they are!—Horses and men—and not only they! The public offices, those mute but glorious retreats of valour, merit, talent, and world wide efficiency?—‘England expects every man to do his duty!’ And are these not the high seats from whence duty and patriotism proclaim decrees little short of divine?

“Nonsense,” says the stranger, “don’t talk to me of patronage, red-tapism, and nepotism. I prefer to those sickly cries of a disappointed few, this more substantial and satisfactory solution of England’s greatness; I better understand these significant symbols of a great success!”

Oh yes! it is a fine sight this London, this centre of a mighty civilization, with the dead heroes standing aloft on grand columns, and the living pageant of well satisfied existence beneath, carriages, horses, shops, palaces, opera, and Parliament. If vice be there, it is clothed: if sorrow, it smiles. Everything is polite, promising, and extremely pleasant. But let the traveller cross the bridge, and lo! he finds himself in the midst of people, sights, sounds, smells, strangely at variance with his charming

faith in this city of palaces, and his experience of this civilized centralization of happiness. Perhaps the region on the Surrey side of the Thames is never more demonstrative of its own peculiar life than on a hot summer's evening. The hive then sends forth its myriads; some to breathe the heavily laden air, others to bargain at the shops where the tale of competition is told in the ticketed trash they contain. The clamorous stalls put in their discordant claim to the notice of the passers by on the dusty pavement against which they set up their moveable market of stale fish, and tainted fruit and vegetables. The innumerable gin-palaces and public-houses, are alight with the flaring gas; they stand, as snares, at every corner. Their horrible glare is a delusive brilliance to the many who enter the ever open door; there is scarcely a distinction of sex or age among the hundreds who cross the threshold, or stand about in crowds, sometimes gossiping and sometimes quarrelling, on the pavement outside.

The theatres, too, are open and placarded with all that can pander to the diseased appetite of a degraded population. Hero thieves, murderous mothers, convict martyrs;—the morality of the drama is very morbid on this Surrey side the water, and within an easy walk of an Archbishop's palace.

And surely if the great Social Reform deal adequately with the young, there is enough work to

do ; judging by the hordes of filthy, ill-looking, and ragged urchins hereabouts. They swarm at every turn ; sometimes looking out for an opportunity to exercise the only handicraft they have ever learned, or, if giving vent to the joyousness of the young free-born Briton, setting up a shout of exultation or execration, one almost equally discordant with the other, and thereby adding to the confusion of every sense in the scene around. But, in the midst, there are some few Protests against this human Chaos. Faith, Hope, and Charity have unfurled their banners over those who do not know the meaning of one, have never felt the blessedness of the other, nor realized the Divine Principle which 'never faileth.'

In an arena which an ignorant population seem to respect (for it is generally more quiet and decorous) are a Refuge for the Indigent Blind, a Home for the Fatherless, and one or two other Institutions which have their foundations in the Creed of a Christian land.

Then, there is the far famed Bedlam. How narrow the bigotry, how fatally sectarian, which somewhere once professed to behold in this over crowded madhouse the sequel to the Romish Church, which flanks the other side the road ! Rather, let the lessons of the neighbourhood around them both, teach the necessity for unity in bringing home the wanderers to one common fold ! Surely, there is

quite enough to account for Madness in the extent of this appalling degradation; but only perhaps more appalling because more naked. Immorality clothed, as observed on the other side the bridge, Immorality clothed and successful, is not so revolting. But have not those grand public offices yonder, done nothing to fill Bedlam?

“There is a capability of insanity in every one who possesses strong feelings, and a quick fancy, perhaps in more than such; and the more the inward man is fed up, and excited while the outward man is hampered, fettered, and misemployed, *or left idle by the neglect of those whose duty it is to put the right men in the right places*, the more will the liability to frenzy increase; the more will there grow not only on individuals but on society a danger of outbreak.”

And further on in this Transpontine Road, stands a building, where the doctrines of even ‘physical outbreak,’ are instilled; where liberty is prostituted by her votaries, and infidelity to all that is good, taught to an excited multitude, labouring under the pressure of a manifold want; greedy after the polluted offals with which they fancy its cravings may be satisfied.

It is an ill-looking building, externally conspicuous for nothing but the large, uncouth letters which announce that “Free Inquiry and Dancing

are carried on within." The placards vary in their promises, but all proclaim some seductive poison for the people. The orators of such a place may be considered beneath notice, but the humanity they corrupt, the passions they inflame, are worthy much consideration. In such hot-beds, Chartist doctrines grow and flourish; and not only those;—a contempt and practical disregard for all that is good and pure. This is, indeed, a very low neighbourhood, in every sense; into it flow, from higher ground, the refuse of society, physical and moral. The drainage is often inefficient, and the sewerage faulty. The water, too, is impure. Borrowing a metaphor from these facts—if men and Christians, forgetful of sectarian prejudices, and crying truce to the vain war of polemic discussion, would only combine to remedy the evils to the soul, with the fraternizing zeal that now does honour to those whose care is the body, what might not be the result! Is London so materialized in its considerations, that Sanatory Reform should win the day against Social Redemption?

One hot summer's evening, before the former had made such rapid strides as at present, a hackney cab stopped in the cross-roads near the building just mentioned; after looking round, as if in uncertainty, the driver turned to the occupant of the dirty vehicle, and asked:

“Which way, your honour, now?”

The passenger looked out of the window, and gave a hasty direction; quickly drawing back his head, as if annoyed by the observation the momentary stoppage caused among the curious crowd below. His hat was drawn down low on his forehead; but it is easy for you, my intelligent reader, to recognize Major Percival.

The driver whipped up his poor jaded horse, and amid some observations from the bystanders (who always seem to spring out of the dust, in this locality, on every small occasion), conveyed his “fare” into a labyrinth of narrow streets and squalid houses, far more depressing than anything yet beheld. Twilight was deepening, and the atmosphere most oppressive; every now and then, the nauseating effluvia from foul ditches, tan-yards, and a low population, greeted the unaccustomed nostrils of the stranger; while half-clothed, ragged children, and dirty women, were lounging about the corners, beneath the black dolls suspended against the marine-store shops, or under the signs of the public-houses; which latter, indeed, seemed by far the most prosperous of anything in this poverty-stricken place. The churches were all shut, the churchyards were all full. But how can the swarming life above ground gain a livelihood? Aye, that is the question, and the difficulty; but that it does somehow, let the

gin-shops, which grow bright by its means, bear testimony.

Having been driven far into this maze, the passenger suddenly stopped the cab, and after settling with the driver—a desperately difficult matter, as the man suspected that, in this case, he would not be called to account for over-charge, “for reasons best known to the gen’leman his-self,”—Major Percival alighted, and, too much absorbed in thought to know the full extent of the observation his unusual appearance attracted (for, though dressed with a plainness amounting to meanness, in a desire to preserve an incognito, he was still quite foreign to the experience of this place and people), he walked on in perplexity as to the way, and passed the graveyard where poor Charles Lyle, who had loved and laboured even here, lay buried.

Taking a turn to the right, not very far from that spot, he found himself in a narrow alley, with an offensive gutter running by the side of the pavement, if pavement might be called the ill-shaped, dirty stones, impeded here and there by refuse heaps. The houses seemed to bend forward in the increasing gloom of the evening; but wretched children were playing in the road, and slatternly women were gossiping beneath the miserable doorways, while loud sounds of contention were unnoticed by these beings so “young and tender,” for they evidently

were accustomed to little else. At length, the Major paused, and asked one of these women if "Mr. Thomson lived in the house," before which she was standing. She looked in his face, and then, turning to her companion :

"I say, Moll," she said, "I s'pose this 'ere is a doctor come to see the child?"

Availing himself of the mistake, he asked, "if it were better, and on which floor he should find it?"

"Oh! up at the top," was the answer. "We lives in the room below, and sure enough I ought to know where it is from its crying—which would be a mercy to stop."

Hastily, the visitor passed through the door, and groping his way along a narrow passage, he managed, with difficulty, to ascend the creaking staircase. Most foul, most deplorable, most offensive, appeared the house he had entered; up he went, higher and higher, but at last, finding himself in total darkness, he paused. Suddenly, however, came a gleam of light; a woman, half-dressed, and with her hair hanging about her shoulders, flung open a door, and shading the miserable candle in her hand, so that it threw up a glare on her own face, terrible with the evidences of the lowest dissipation, she gave a loud laugh, and cried out :

"Holloa! who have we got here?"

A man's gruff voice was heard in some coarse,

indifferent reply; but the visitor, seeing by the fitful light, that he was near his journey's end, passed upward, muttering something about "a doctor and the child above-stairs." She still stood, looking after him, in curiosity; and thus was he enabled to mount another flight; when a broken skylight above his head helped to assure him that his destination was reached. He then entered a half-open door on the right.

On a mattress in the corner of the room in which Major Percival now found himself, was a feverish, wailing, puny child. It might have been taken for a mere infant as to size, but a little cracked voice cried out, "oh, mother, mother, do give me some drink." This miserable little creature, was sitting up beneath a torn and soiled coverlid, which, too scanty to conceal the mattress, large pieces of flock and straw were seen bulging out of its ragged sides. One little thin hand was playing with some of this straw, but, between the short breath, and hard cough (a cough like that of a strong grown person) came the wailing, peevish cry, "oh—give me something to drink." Some wretched articles of coarse under-clothing were hung up to dry on a rope stretched across the dark low ceiling. A small and very rickety deal table stood in the middle of the room, on which was a broken mug, and a common pipe, the recent fumes from which still lingered in this ill-

ventilated attic: while the walls were bare in some places, and encumbered with the remains of some sort of paper in others, such decoration evidently having long ago peeled off under the influence of damp. Although this was a summer's evening, the evidences, too, of a recent rain were still perceptible in one especially discoloured spot where it had penetrated the roof. In this corner, just beneath this dark, humid patch, stood a woman, engaged seemingly, in preparing something wherewith to fulfil the child's request. The unsnuffed candle, standing in a dark glass bottle, revealed her, and all that surrounded her, to Major Percival, before she was aware of his presence. But when she turned, she neither started nor screamed at the sight of the tall stranger. With the cup of water still in her hand, and her child's cry in her ears, she slowly advanced a step, and stood in perfect silence.

The Major approached; he took her disengaged hand, and looking down on the face which refused to meet his, said:

"Ellen! I am grieved to see you thus."

The hand he held trembled, but no other sign of emotion did the woman shew. Then, still without looking up, she disengaged herself, and quietly approaching her child, she held the cup to his parched and fevered lips; mechanically smoothing the coverlid before she left him.

Major Percival watched her do all this. She was still rather young, and had been, probably, very pretty; but the shabby and ill-made gown concealed all of her figure except the fact of its extreme thinness; and the face was difficult to decipher, in everything but its lines of want and extreme suffering. Her once dark hair was streaked with white; but when she, at length, raised her eyes, casting a furtive glance towards the guest, as he leaned against the mantel-shelf, their expression was soft and remorseful.

Gradually, as if drawn by some irresistible impulse, she noiselessly approached, and timidly laid her worn hand on his arm. He turned, and for a moment, caught a glimpse of those eyes, now almost tender and appealing, as they were raised timidly to his. He placed his hand on her's, and in a low, inquiring voice, said,

“He has not ill-used you?”

There was something in her look which made such a possible fact a most brutal and unmanly one.

“Ah!” she answered in a hushed voice, and fearfully glancing towards the door, “what could I expect? How dare I? But—but—for your sake—for mine—for his—” (pointing towards the child), “do as he bids you—alas! he is well-nigh desperate.”

She then sprung from his side; her well-accus-

tomed ear detected the sounds of an approaching footstep before they were audible to another.

In a minute the door was rudely flung open, and the same figure entered which had accosted the Major the preceding evening in Belgrave Square.

Slowly the man divested himself of his shabby hat and a thick handkerchief which he had worn around his throat; then, throwing these down roughly on the bed where the child now slept, he walked up to the visitor, and sticking his hands in his pockets, exclaimed:

“So you are here, are you?”

The face which was thrust with a sort of defiance towards Major Percival, shewed signs of drunkenness and debauchery, but the small, cunning eye, now wearing an expression of triumph, was the most repulsive proof of its owner's character.

Major Percival drew himself up; then, slightly recoiling, answered coldly,

“I told you I would come.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed the man, derisively, “as if your word would have convinced me, or any body else whose acquaintance is as close and old! But I believed you this once, because I knew—”

“We had better make our interview as short as possible,” interposed the Major in the same constrained tone he had before used.

“Oh! But perhaps you would have hardly said

that, before I happened to come in just now. Old remembrances—aha!”

The woman turned suddenly towards him with an air of offended pride; then, shaking her head, she again stooped down over the feverish child, to whose breathing she had seemingly been listening.

“But you know the only way to cut our meeting short?” he added, in a tone of dogged resistance, and a horrid oath.

Silently and deliberately, Major Percival drew forth a pocket-book from his breast, and, while the man held out his hand eagerly, unfolded some bank notes to a considerable amount.

“One, two, three, for hush money,” cried the brute with a sneer, and clutching them, “but you don’t get rid of me for this. I’ll do the other thing, as I told you; but,” (with a terrific expletive) “I’ve had enough of the other end of the world, thanks to you, my gentleman, for one while.”

“I shall see you again,” began Major Percival.

“Aye, that you will;” was the reply, interposed with a jeering laugh, “you may reckon sure of a sight of me; but now for my share of the bargain as far as it goes. Here Ellen,” he called out to the woman, “leave that brat while it is quiet, and tell what you know.”

The woman came forward; there was a momentary hesitation in her manner, as she stood, with her thin

hands clasped, before this strangely assorted pair ; but her husband, with another terrible epithet, admonished her to "speak out ;" and in a voice, trembling at first, she thus obeyed.

"My grandmother was in the room, when the old man died. She had attended Sir Richard Lester through his last illness. His niece was with him always, but she required the menial assistance which my grandmother rendered."

"But the will—the will . . ." hoarsely suggested Major Percival.

"Was properly witnessed," answered the woman.

"Was he in his right mind ?" asked Major Percival.

"No doubt of it at the time. But afterwards he wandered—talked of Italy and your—"

The Major moved uneasily. Then the woman went on :

"But, he was quite right between while. One day, the day before he died, his senses were quite clear ; he heard my grandmother move in the room, but thought it was his niece, as everybody else was obliged to keep out of his sight as much as possible on account of his fierce temper. So my grandmother kept behind the curtain. 'Beatrice,' he said, 'remember the paper in the iron box. It lies on the top, to the right hand side. If he should ever come back—but I believe he is dead beyond all doubt—"

I can trust you.' And then he added, 'but do not let your woman's curiosity (for of course you are not free from it) be prying into, and disturbing my papers after I am gone. *Let them all remain as they are. It is the safest plan.*"

"And did she?" eagerly asked Major Percival.

"Ah, that she did," answered the woman, "as I have every reason to believe. Of course, she never heard this injunction of her uncle; but that it was not the only time he had given utterance to it, was proved by her saying afterwards to my grandmother, 'Do not touch that iron box, I would not have it removed from where it is on any consideration.'"

"And where was it?"

"It was, and is, in Sir Richard Lester's study, or what was called such, at the end of the picture gallery. You may remember," she added, with a wistful and peculiar glance, "you may remember that it was double locked, and shut in by a panel which none could open but those who know the secret spring; and built above the deep moat which no one could cross on that side of the Castle; or if they did, they could not scale the high circular wall, which has no footing beneath it."

"But how could you gain access to that room?" asked Major Percival.

"Easily;" interposed the man, in a surly tone, "her grandmother is now bed-ridden, but her grand-

father still goes up to the Castle every day from the cottage by the stream; he wants her to go and live with him again; she would undertake some of the house duties at the top of the hill, and could go backwards and forwards whenever she liked."

The woman sighed deeply. Was there anything in that mention of "the cottage by the stream," (the same to which Beatrice Lester had been carried, when rescued from its torrent years before) which recalled some tender remembrance, or awakened a poignant repentance? Her husband evidently thought so, for looking at her savagely,

"If you're going to have any d—d nonsense of that sort," he exclaimed, "you know what I can do," and he glanced threateningly towards Major Percival. She pretended not to hear him; but, with wonderful self-possession, thus addressed their guest.

"The good she has done is very great down there."

"I suppose so," was the abstracted answer.

"It was very different in our—I mean, my day," she added.

"Are the people satisfied?" asked the Major, with a new interest.

"So my grandfather declares in his letter," she answered, "they are fed, clothed, taught and even amused by her means."

"In fact, she's going on with Parson Lyle's work,

though she don't live there," said the man with a sneer.

"Has she ever been there since Sir Richard's death?" asked Major Percival.

"On two occasions, I have heard, for about six months," was the woman's reply.

"Did the people see much of her?"

"Aye, that did they; but whether absent or present (and she would more often be there but for some whim of her uncle's, my grandfather says) they look upon her as their benefactress."

"Is the land cultivated?"

"Yes, and the outer railing removed from the stream in which she was once nearly drowned."

"And now," said the man, proceeding to fill his pipe, "and now, as your grandfather helped to restore her to life on that occasion, you are going to hand her over to poverty on this, Mistress Ellen. One gift from your family is quite enough—eh?" he asked in a jeering tone.

She clasped her hands, so worn with rough work, but still delicate of shape, over her chest—and looking, for a moment, almost wildly, from one to the other, she exclaimed—

"Alas!—what can I do?—How can I get away from it?"

"Nohow—" coarsely and coolly responded the man, "when it's a game of diamond cut diamond

between your seducer and your husband; it would be difficult to give the preference, wouldn't it, if we were chained side by side, out in that pleasant place beyond seas from which we have just made a trip to old England?"

But the woman had again receded to the side of her sleeping child.

"Has it had a doctor?" asked Major Percival, moving towards the door.

She mournfully shook her head.

"Shall I—?" commenced the guest, but the man looked fiercely up, as if to warn him against any interference.

"She will go down in a month from this time," he said, doggedly resuming the former conversation, "and that," pointing to the child, "with her—if it's not somewhere else by that time."

Then, as if remembering the darkness of the staircase, and also as a hint to the visitor to depart without further delay, he caught up the candle, and stood with him on the threshold of the door.

"Fine place—isn't it?" he asked in a mocking tone, but louder than any in which they had yet spoken, "we muster two or three families in every room here."

Major Percival shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh! that's nothing, Sir," he rejoined in

different manner to that which he had hitherto manifested, and as if anxious for his fellow-lodgers to overhear him, "why, in your profession," (so it was he who had given out the idea of a strange doctor paying his child a visit) "you must have seen quite enough to shew you that it's not as bad as it might be. Why, I've heard that in the back streets of some of the finest neighbourhoods in London the same thing is found. One gentleman tells a story of going into one room in Mary'bone, and finding five families in it; and moreover, that they all got on very well till the middle lot took a lodger who upset 'em all."

"I believe such things are too true," answered Major Percival, willing, for some reason of his own, to humour the discourse.

"Yes; but the landlords!" exclaimed the man with something like genuine feeling, "the landlords! ought they to be let off easily, Sir, do you think? Sporting themselves in their luxuries and the wealth screwed out of such misery, living in their fine houses with their dainty wives and daughters, who can't bear a vulgar sight, a loud sound, or bad scent, what do you suppose the poor think of them, and feel about them, when they ask for common decencies in return for their hard earned rent, and can't get them from the

man it goes to, or from his hard grinding agents? You may have been abroad, Sir, (I believe you have) but did you ever see anything equal to the bloated wealth at one end of London, or the squalid poverty at the other?—And sometimes, as I just said, they run side by side.”

And, with a well assumed respect he saw his visitor safely out of the house. His language and manner had completely changed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A Queer Place—Talent turned to bad Account—The “Diable Boiteux” of Bermondsey—A Quaint Companion—The Ragged School—The Chartist.

As the Major picked his way along the ill-lighted labyrinth of poverty in which he found himself, meditating on the darker maze of his own heart, or evil knows what beside, he was unconscious that a boy about sixteen years of age followed him, by keeping under the dark shadow of the wretched houses. Presently the stranger emerged into a more open space, in which grew rank grass under dilapidated walls; it was only overlooked by the shabby back windows of habitations little less squalid than that he had just quitted. A few parched and stunted trees had been, some time or other, planted on the other side the wall, their blackened and crooked branches being just visible above its top. At the furthest corner of this space, Major Percival paused as if in doubt which way to proceed; on one

hand an interminable row of miserable dwellings; on the other, a road strewed with the signs of contiguity to some new branch of railway. The moon by fitful gleams, for dark clouds were in the sky, penetrated the dense atmosphere, and rendered a better sight of the locality more embarrassing. But suddenly, a voice exclaimed at his side.

"A pity your talent has not been put to a better account, my young friend;" and starting round, Major Percival perceived a gentleman standing immediately behind him, and a big boy struggling and blubbering in his grasp. Still holding the lad with one hand, by the collar, the captor held out towards the Major, the watch which had just been very cleverly abstracted from his pocket.

"I would advise you to leave such a dainty thing at home next time, Sir," he said, "when you pay a visit to a neighbourhood in which Time gives few warnings and less hope."

"It is unaccountable how it could have been taken;" exclaimed Major Percival.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the other, "not nearly so much so as the manner in which an utilitarian and economical age lets so much expert intelligence run to waste. And now what are we to do with you?" he added, turning to the lad, who had subsided into a dogged silence, and giving him a queer, but not cruel, little shake.

"Oh! let me go—let me go," he burst forth again, "I'll never do so no more, if the gem'm 'll only let me off. Oh, Sir, pray do—it warn't for myself—I never gets no good out of them 'ere things."

"No—I don't think you do;" quietly answered the stranger, whom the reader may have already recognized as Doctor M——, who had once carried some quaint sort of consolation to the little lodging of Eustace and Amy.

"Oh, yes—pray liberate him;" exclaimed Major Percival, drawing up his lofty figure, and speaking in a tone of ineffable unconcern as to such a trifle. "I have my watch, thanks to you, Sir, and what object can there be in prosecuting the poor wretch who stole it?"

"A great one;" answered Dr. M——, and then he quietly, but caustically added, "unless you have as little regard to the Society of which you are both members as he has."

Major Percival did not like the tone, but was obliged to submit. It was evident that inquiry would rather be courted than evaded by any further semblance of morbid mercy.

"Oh, of course," he answered, "if you look at it in that light, I quite agree. But really, my recent return to England puts me at a disadvantage as to its laws and localities."

"Ah—eh!" cried the Doctor, who now saw a policeman coming, "but I'll be bound you never found such a paradox as either, in any part of the globe."

The boy was now formally given in charge; the policeman seemed to know the Doctor well; and, touching his hat, assented to some directions given in an under tone. The moonbeams at this moment fell on the group, and by their aid, Dr. M——, looked with a strange scrutiny into the countenance of the young delinquent; then, taking up a portion of his ragged garments "Yes;" he muttered. "But *such* poor we need not have always with us;" then, turning to Major Percival, "and now, Sir," he added, "let me shew you your way out of a place for which you may be thankful, to have brought a benediction."

"I confess I do not understand you," was the reply.

"Any more, perhaps, than how I sprung out of the ground at the right moment?"

"It certainly surprised me."

"Know then," he answered, laughing, "I am the Diable Boiteux of this place ;

"I dine on some homicides done in *ragout*,
And a rebel or so in an Irish stew ;
In darkness my children take most delight,
And I see how my favourites thrive.

But there's nothing so racy for supper as a fricassee of such murdered moralities, as that." And he pointed over his shoulder in the direction of the juvenile offender. Then, in a different tone, he added, "I assure you that the machinery of this neighbourhood is very complete, if you can get a proper hand to work it; but if played with, or turned the wrong way, it will hurt you, or even catch you up, and grind you in its great wheels."

"I am a stranger here."

"Yes; but not, I dare say, to human nature, and certain universal laws. There is scarcely a great quality but has a reverse, nor a bad one but owns two sides. 'Ogni medaglio—' (you know the proverb). Now, the observation, the foresight, the combination, skill, and dexterity of that young thief are admirable. Their promise is only perverted by a bad education."

"And yet you advise me to send him to prison, where he will meet with a worse poison?"

"And certain moral death? No; I never advised anything of the sort. 'Evil communications corrupt good manners;' what, therefore, shall a foul example do to those already tainted? But have you not heard of such things as reformatories? Your suggestion, just now, my good friend, would go for something in favour of them in this case."

"Ah! I see now the course you deem advisable," answered the Major.

"Although," continued the Doctor, "it may be some time before a system so worthy a Christian land, and the common sense of which it boasts, will be thoroughly worked, yet much is being done towards it; and among such beneficent endeavours may be reckoned those of individuals. One gentleman I know, at the other end of the town, has instituted an admirable reformatory for adults, where the culprits are first submitted to a certain salutary proof and discipline, then taught a trade or handicraft, and finally shipped off, under proper auspices, to the Colonies. But, after all, it is with the young that the most efficient work can be done; without boring you (for perhaps you don't care for such things) with the formal statistics of crime, it is known that it takes root, generally, in the impressionable soil of early youth."

"But if, instead of being punished," exclaimed Major Percival (who, like most men whose conscience is as sound, was a great advocate of Justice *versus* Mercy), "these juvenile criminals are to be housed, clothed, and taught, you hold out a premium to evil."

"Industry and decency are no premium to habitual idleness, nor strict discipline to a reprobate insubordination. I doubt whether many would not feel more

at home under the old system. Remember that an occupation, without thought, is not laborious to a strong lad, nor the privations of a common prison terrible to those whose antecedents are of homes like these around us; while the society of others in the like predicament would be altogether congenial. But order to the disorderly is no light task."

They had walked on some distance towards London Bridge, and now, beneath some large but gloomy railway arches, they espied a gleam of ruddy light through a half-open wooden door.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Doctor, "here is the best solution to your difficulty, in Education. Would it trouble you too much," he added, half sarcastically, "to enter a Ragged School? As a stranger, Sir, to England, it may present to you some features of interest and novelty."

Having no excuse to make for the momentary delay, Major Percival entered a long, whitewashed, but well-ventilated building, in which was a stranger crowd than he had ever even beheld on the banks of the Ganges. There, the variety would be in race, complexion, costume; but no distinction between European and Asiatic could be so startling and interesting to the observing, as the different moral characteristics in this medley of ragged ignorance, and intelligence beneath filthy garments—what signs of the new-born hope, the struggling perception, of

some who had never known the one, nor possessed other experience than that of vice in the streets, and the necessity of *acquisitiveness* to life !

Some stood there for the first time, tempted to enter by the vision of light and comfort, so foreign to anything they had ever before known, after peeping at it through the half-open door ; they stared with wonder and stupid curiosity, until coaxed by the kindness of some intelligent teacher to approach nearer to the class of children who, for the first time, were listening to his simple explanation of the commonest principles of some common thing. Sometimes it was put to the vote as to what they would like to hear about. In one such instance, "boots and shoes" had been selected by those whose feet were either bare, or covered by the dirty and worn remains of what once had been. Some of these young faces were lowering ; the heavy scowl of an hereditary dissatisfaction gave little promise of a happy or hopeful future ; but, on a few, the new light was glorious to witness ; a dawn struggling through the night of an ignorance not so — eventually — terrible to the outcast as to the self-satisfied society which takes no heed of his just claims.

Many of these children knew not the name of home ; others but regarded it as some foul and fearful place, where the short proceeds of the dishonest craft alone taught there would be visited by

cruel punishment. But, among the gentler of these poor untaught and untamed, who can declare that the long-suppressed love and smothered instincts were not the heir-looms of some unhappy mother, whose heavenly gifts had been perverted, but never, in the lowest degradation, quite extinct? The inevitable laws of nature, by which, in one sense, the "sins of the fathers are visited upon the children," are also very legible as regards maternity in "the fruit of the womb," which ought to be considered an "heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord." In witnessing, therefore, the first emotions of tenderness in the poor, ragged, neglected boy or girl, who may deny its generation from some woman's heart, where Love, though outraged, was still beautiful, and, in its origin, divine?

The idea ought also to render a teacher in such a place very patient towards the stubborn and intractable: for, by the same rule, he cannot be certain but that the evil was originally sown by the brutality of the man towards the mother, too ample probability of which is to be found in the revolting details of the daily newspapers. If one of those teachers, to whom weakness is sacred, and woman a better angel, were to behold both crushed down, and in anguish, by the ill-usage of one of his own sex, he would raise his voice and arm against the gross violation; let him, therefore, pity and respect the after symbols of the

terrible resistance into which affection has been goaded, and of the black despair by which a woman's and a mother's heart has been enshrouded by the power from whence all protection and care ought to have encompassed her.

"You see that boy;" said Dr. M——, "his countenance and *cranium* leave no doubt that he is cowardly, but desperate. It is likely that he may have never heard of his parents; (many who stand here are ignorant of the woman who bore them) but, in all human probability, his mother was affectionate and ill-treated."

"Do you really believe in such hereditary possibilities?" asked the Major.

"Undoubtedly," was the answer. "Organic laws are plain and unanswerable. Without appealing to my own daily experience, I will recall to you, as once pointed out to me, the peculiarity of James the First, of England. David Rizzio was murdered by armed nobles, in the presence of his mother, Mary, shortly before his birth. She, like her race, was courageous, (the Stuarts, you remember, were distinguished for this quality) but James the First was characterized by fear. On the other hand, Napoleon's mother was not only brave in the hour of emergency, but triumphed over danger. Her spirit rose by antagonistic circumstances."

The subject seemed to interest Major Percival

more than any yet suggested, notwithstanding the silence which succeeded Dr. M——'s illustrations.

But from time to time, that worthy man cast a keen glance at his haughty companion. If well read in "Organic law," what history did he discover in this tall, dark stranger?

Just as they were about moving away, Dr. M—— paused, and pointing out one of the teachers.

"Oh, there," said he, "is a scholar and a gentleman, though only a paper-bag maker by trade. He is a true Christian also, which perhaps explains the second qualification just named; and when I add that he is a Dissenter, it ought to teach a Churchman like myself to be more than tolerant. Humble, though self-taught; honest, though poor; meek, though very good, and extremely learned—even to the languages of the East and the Ancients—that man knows well how to adapt himself to the requirements of his present occupation. Such are the elements which, in a class looked down upon by the exclusive bigot of class or sect, are doing in this region, a great work for the nation and its prosperity. While parliament is talking, some among the people are doing. And, while the hubbub and confusion retard a thoroughly diffusive and universal education, or merely accept the Reformatory System, the next best step, daintily and in part, unknown and unostentatious individuals, as before said, are effecting a glorious work. Bah!

'what right have we to punish where we don't educate?'"

"But surely some help comes from the upper classes?"

"I am far too liberal to deny it; give every creed and every set its due. And, by the bye, there is one, high up in the social tree, who unsuspectedly showers down great blessings on these lower branches. Indeed, for that matter, her influence is even present in this place."

"*Her* influence?"

"Yes, Sir, hers;" was the Doctor's quick and merrily sounding answer. Then addressing himself to a man who had just claimed his notice. "I say, Wells," he continued, "am I not right in saying that a great lady has not deemed such a place as this beneath her practical consideration?"

"True enough, that, Doctor," replied the man, "you allude, of course, to Miss Lester."

Major Percival started with some emotion beyond even his control. The Doctor wheeled round, and looked at him as he winced. Then, not appearing to have noticed any particular sign, he carelessly asked.

"Do you know her?"

"Yes, that is I have heard her name—and—that she is very charitable."

"I should think she is!" burst in the man.

"Why, Sir, the very idea of that woman keeps many about here in better humour with her class than they have cause to be."

"Come, come," said the Doctor, "none of your Chartist notions, if you please, Wells. If you bring them with you, you will only do more harm than good here."

"Sir, I'm sick of the People," he answered, walking beside the two gentlemen as they passed the wooden screen which sheltered the school-room from the outer door.

"What!" exclaimed the Doctor, suddenly stopping. "You, their professed friend and advocate in a state of disgust? I expected that my own sympathies would have been fanned into a flame by your breath."

The Chartist orator (for such he was) drew himself up and looked monstrosly knowing. His blue eye kindled, and his naturally florid complexion became even more deeply flushed as he exclaimed, but in a low voice :

"They are only trucklers and flunkies after all."

"My good friend," said the Doctor, laying his hand on his shoulder, "your pride has been pricked ; now, don't let such an aristocratic fact get the better of you."

"No, Doctor, no," he answered, clenching one hand, and emphatically laying it on the open palm of the other—

"It is not my pride but their prosperity, wherever they can pick it up, which militates against the principle. Why, if one man can afford to pay a better price for their goods than another, they cringe and fawn like a dog to the hand which first throws down the bone and then beats him."

"I wish, certainly, though on different grounds to yourself, that our shopkeepers were more independent," answered the Doctor.

"Ugh! independence!" exclaimed Wells. "They are voluntary slaves. It's all money. Gold gluts them. They have no self-respect to weigh in their dirty scales against their greediness."

"But through what agency would you propose a reform?"

"The revolution must come through the women;" answered the Chartist, "with their ignorance, vanity, and short-sightedness, originate the flunkeyism of the sons and the bloated self-satisfaction of the husbands. Until you can elevate them, what can be done with the men, whose first instruction and impressions are derived from them in childhood; and to whom they are the inspiration of after life?"

"But this redemption—"

"Must be the work of a woman;" continued the enthusiastic Wells, "who but one of their own sex knows the key to their hearts, or the proper lever for their ambition? Who but a woman would

have the patience, perseverance, and fine tact essential to such an undertaking!"

"So you see that the mission of a Sister of Charity is of wide extent;" quietly said Dr. M——, and, without any reply, but an assenting bow, Major Percival emerged with him again into the gloomy street.

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